

## Kuwait-UAE telephones restored

ABU DHABI (AP) — This southern Gulf country became one of the first to restore telephone links with war-ravaged Kuwait, officials said Sunday. Telephone links between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait have been restored after an eight-month break caused by the Gulf war, a senior UAE telecommunications official said. Ali Salem Al Owais said the calls could be booked at the UAE telecommunications company, Etisalat, through the company's switchboard. Direct dialling is not yet possible and cheap discounted rates are also not being offered during the night because the calls to Kuwait are still operator-assisted, he said. Those wishing to call Kuwait must show up at Etisalat offices and pay cash in advance for the call. Telephone links between Kuwait and the outside world were ruptured in the first days of the Aug. 2 Iraqi invasion of the country. After the country was liberated, residents have mainly relied on expensive satellite phone links.

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## Allies want to expand control in north Iraq

ZAKHO (Agencies) — Western military commanders said Sunday they were ready to put more of northern Iraq off limits to Iraqi government troops to establish "safe havens" for Kurdish refugees.

U.S. military helicopters ferried more Kurds into the first Western-protected areas near this northern Iraqi town.

"We'll have to extend it (the security zone) as far as we feel is necessary to give adequate protection," Brigadier Andrew Keeling, commanding British royal marines in northern Iraq, told reporters.

The plan to extend the zone is aimed at coaxing nearly one million terrified Kurds to abandon squalid mountain retreats in northern Iraq and southern Turkey and to return to their homes or to allied-controlled sanctuaries in Iraq.

Scores more Kurdish refugees were flown on Sunday to the first safe haven east to Zakho and 15 kilometres from the Turkish border. They joined 250 Kurds who arrived on Saturday — the camp's first refugees.

The allies are bringing in 1,000 young Kurdish men from the sprawling Isikveren camp in southern Turkey to help with work at the Zakho camp and to encourage others to return.

United Nations officials visited the Zakho refugee camp for the first time on Sunday, and said they would also meet Iraqi officials in the nearby town.

"We will be back soon in a proper way — in the next few days," the head of the three-man U.N. team, Stefan Mestura, said. "This is a preparatory mission."

He would not be drawn on British proposals, endorsed by European Community (EC) foreign ministers, to set up a U.N. police force to replace the allied troops in the "safe haven zone" along the Iraqi border.

Allied forces will push the present security zone further to the east of Zakho to include a string on Iraqi mountain valleys.

Thousands of refugees, mostly Kurds, are camped in cars, cardboard boxes and tents in mountain retreats above the Iraqi valleys.

The European Community agreed Sunday to push for a United Nations civilian police force to replace the Western troops in northern Iraq.

But Britain, which proposed the plan at an informal weekend meeting of EC foreign ministers, said the force could still need air cover as protection against the Iraqi army.

Police would differ from a military force in that they would probably carry only light weapons and would have no armoured vehicles or heavy artillery, British officials said.

Belgium's Mark Eyskens, whose country is the current president of the U.N. Security Council, said he would fly to New York to Monday to campaign for the establishment of the force.

"It might well be from the Iraqi point of view that they would rather have a police force than troops (on their soil)," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said.

Iran said that 1,000 refugees or Iranian descent who had been stranded in camps along the Iraq-Kuwait border had been flown to Iran.

The Iranian news agency IRNA said more flights were being arranged to repatriate others still in the area.

Relief officials say Tehran has agreed to take 1,500 refugees from the camps who can prove some link to Iran and may even-

## King welcomes Baghdad's accord with Kurds, hopes it will serve Iraqi unity

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday welcomed an agreement reached between the Iraqi government and Kurdish leaders on autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan and expressed hope that the accord would lead to enhancing Iraqi unity and help the country restore its security and stability.

It was the first official Jordanian reaction to the accord, announced last week by Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani after talks with Iraqi leaders in Baghdad, including President Saddam Hussein.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said the King's welcome of the agreement came in a cable he sent to President Saddam congratulating the Iraqi leader on the occasion of his 54th birthday.

"The King wished President Saddam success in his efforts to reconcile the various sectors of the Iraqi people and to restore cohesion between the Arab and Kurdish nations in accordance with the rules and hases both parties agree upon," Petra reported.

"The King also expressed hope that such efforts would contribute to enhancing Iraq's national unity and that Iraq would restore its strength and

health to reconstruct the country and strengthen the pillars of security and stability," it said.

King Hussein wished the Iraqi president continued good health and happiness and the Iraqi people further progress and prosperity, Petra added.

Iraqi newspapers Sunday devoted their editorial comments and banner headlines to the praise of President Saddam.

Al Thawra, organ of the ruling Baath Party, spoke of the Iraqi people's pride in their ruler who, it said, had given leadership "new Arab and international dimensions marked by honour, straightforwardness, chivalry, sacrifices," the Iraqi News Agency (INA) said.

It described President Saddam as the source of Iraq's strength and said a media campaign against him was meant to sap that strength.

"When the alliance of aggression and evil focuses its campaigns on the person of the leader, utilises all its media weight and wages a ferocious psychological war to undermine his standing and status, this shows that the enemies are targeting Iraq's basic source of strength and its major asset," INA quoted the newspaper as saying.

"When the Iraqis elevate their leader President Saddam Hussein as a banner, a sword, and a symbol of survival, construction, honour and pride, they deal a blow to all evil capitals, symbols, and agents," Al Thawra said.

Al Jomhuriyah said President Saddam's birthday was "the most beautiful occasion in which the meanings of love, faith and pride are embodied."

"The Iraqis did not want Saddam Hussein to celebrate his birthday with his family members. They wanted his birthday to be an Iraqi national and pan-Arab day."

"They honestly feel that he deserves this, because he is close to them. He knows exactly what gladdens and worries them. He is very close to them and to their hearts," it said.

Al Qadisiya said the president had become the symbol of the nation's renaissance.

"President Saddam Hussein continues to express the nation's ambitions and hopes for renaissance and for attaining its objectives to guarantee a bright future," it said.

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## Israeli cabinet squabbles over Baker's peace efforts

### Assad: Israel, not Arabs, blocks peace

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Yitzhak Shamir expressed optimism about the direction of the U.S. Middle East peace drive Sunday, but his cabinet then got into a squabble over exactly where the American effort was headed.

Interviewed on Israel Radio, Mr. Shamir brushed aside reports of pessimism from Washington following Secretary of State James Baker's latest Middle East peace shuttle that wound up Friday.

"I don't think we are in a crisis... the time has not come for despair on this matter," said Mr. Shamir. "The talks are at their height... there are certain achievements, and agreements are lacking on some points."

Mr. Shamir said he thought "there is a chance to start the direct negotiations Israel has wanted" with Arab countries.

But he conceded Israel's view of a Middle East conference — a one-time meeting leading to separate talks with each Arab state and the Palestinians — was at odds with American and Arab views.

The Arabs have long demanded a U.N.-sponsored international conference on Middle East. Israel rejects such an idea.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad says Israel, not the Arabs, is blocking

U.S. efforts to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

But he added that while Syria wanted peace it would not abandon its rights or bargain them away.

"Our position is clear. We want peace and we work for it on the basis of the international legitimacy represented by U.N. resolutions," Mr. Assad said in a speech at a Saturday dinner for Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"We will not abandon our rights and we will not bargain."

Mr. Assad said Israel was challenging the whole world, including the United States, by rejecting U.N. resolutions.

He said Israel's continued occupation of Arab territory "requires us to work seriously to achieve effective Arab and Islamic solidarity to counter this aggression and the danger of Israel's expansionist plans."

Mr. Assad said: "Certainly Syria and (other) Arabs would not cause the failure of the current peace initiative. Israel would cause the failure by its insistence on its obstinate position."

This appears clearly in statements made by Israeli officials rejecting U.N. resolutions which challenge the world community, including the United States."

Mr. Assad said Syria continued to insist that the U.N. should have a significant role in the conference and that Europe should be represented as well as the United States and the Soviet Union.

He reiterated that settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based on Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories and recognition of the national

rights of the Palestinian people.

He noted that U.S. President George Bush had said after the Gulf war that he was determined to launch a serious effort to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on U.N. resolutions.

"We heard personally from the American president a confirmation of this," Mr. Assad said. "He also sent his Foreign Minister James Baker in consecutive missions to the region to follow up this effort."

Mr. Assad, whose relations with the U.S. were improved dramatically by Syria's support for the anti-Iraq allies in the Gulf war, met Mr. Bush in Geneva in November for the first time in more than 11 years between Syria and U.S. heads of state.

"We welcomed this development in the U.S. position because we first want just and comprehensive peace and secondly because we saw in this development a positive stand if the initiative brought the hoped-for result," Mr. Assad said.

Mr. Baker, seeking a middle ground, has been urging a conference sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, with some role for European nations.

Mr. Shamir in his radio interview said his government would not change its view that a peace conference could only meet once, then break up into bilateral talks.

"Israel has also insisted for years on the principle of direct talks, and we cannot move from this principle," he said.

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## Air force officers graduate

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday attended the graduation of the first batch of students from the Air Command and Staff College and presented them with their certificates. The King also handed meritorious awards to students excelling in training.

The King was accompanied by Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Fathi Abu Taleb. The graduation ceremony was attended by Their Royal Highnesses Princes Faisal Ben Al Hussein and Talal Ben



His Majesty King Hussein Sunday presents certificates to a graduate from the Air Command and Staff College (Petra photo).  
Mohammad, Prime Minister  
Mudarras, Royal Court  
Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker,  
Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament Ahmad Al Lawzi,  
the Civil Defence Department  
director, the Royal Jordanian Air Force commander and senior Armed Forces officers.

## Israelis shoot and wound 6 in occupied territories

### Nusseibeh released from jail; Israeli court rejects case against Jewish settlement

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israeli troops shot and wounded six Palestinians, one seriously, during clashes in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank Sunday.

Palestinian sources said a man was wounded by troops firing at demonstrators in Nablus where Arabs stoned Israeli soldiers and cars bearing non-West Bank number plates.

In the Gaza Strip, clashes broke out in the towns of Rafah and Khan Younis where youths stoned Israeli army patrols, they said. Five Palestinians were wounded by army gunfire, hospital sources said.

Military officials said soldiers in Rafah chased masked youths

armed with knives and axes. During the chase one youth was shot and seriously wounded. Another was apparently wounded but escaped.

The army said it was checking reports of more casualties.

Israel's supreme court meanwhile, rejected Sunday a case filed by Palestinians: that a Jewish settlement in the occupied West Bank was built on their land.

The three justices said the Palestinians had not presented enough evidence and advised their lawyer to collect more and file a new petition.

A group of Palestinians from Kift Harith village near Nablus filed a petition 10 days ago to evict 40 Jews who moved into a

hastily-built settlement nearby called Revava. The Palestinians said the four hectare site belonged to them.

The judges said the Palestinians and lawyer Lynda Brayer should coordinate with Israeli military authorities to visit the settlement and take precise measurements to present the court.

Jewish settlers rushed mobile homes Revava under cover of darkness. They called it message of defiance to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker ahead of a visit to Israel.

Some 100,000 Jews live in fortified settlements among the

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## Syria calls for Iranian role in Gulf security arrangement

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria called for an Iranian role in the future security of the Gulf on the second day of talks between President Hafez Al Assad and visiting Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"Syria has always said and stressed that Iran should have a role in the higher affairs of the region due to the links between Iran and Arabs in various matters," said the Sunday edition of Al Baath, newspaper of the ruling party.

The official daily Tishreen said a security accord signed by Syria, Egypt and Arab Gulf states would allow Iran to "play its positive security role in the security and safety of the region."

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — grouped in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — promised Iran

a role in the security arrangements drawn up after a U.S.-led coalition pushed Iraq out of Kuwait.

But the plan signed by the GCC, Egypt and Syria in Damascus in March made no mention of Iran. Tehran criticised the plan for excluding it.

Mr. Rafsanjani, making his first foreign trip since becoming president in 1989, said on Saturday Iran was ready to play its role in Gulf security.

"We announce our readiness to cooperate sincerely with countries of the region to preserve security in a way that would serve the interests of the Islamic countries," he said.

Mr. Assad agreed that security in the Gulf should be the responsibility of all regional states.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, who is also in Damascus after visiting Saudi

Arabia, said on Saturday that Tehran and Riyadh had agreed to work for regional security through closer ties.

Surrounded by hundreds of his excited countrymen chanting Islamic slogans, President Rafsanjani wept Sunday as he kissed the shrine of a Muslim saint during the second day of his state visit.

Mr. Rafsanjani, making his first visit abroad since becoming president in 1989, also held a closed-door meeting with President Assad.

After the meeting, Mr. Assad's spokesman, Jibrae Kouriah, said the leaders viewpoints "converged" on the issues discussed.

He said those included Syria's efforts to implement an Arab-backed peace accord in Lebanon which calls for disbanding all militias this month, as well as,

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## Water lifeline choked in the valley; what flows next?

By Ghadeer Taher  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan Valley farmers, whose crops were severely damaged by government-supplied polluted water, will not be pressing charges against the agencies responsible, but controversy continues to surround the future supply of water to the area, which produces the bulk of Jordan's vegetable produce.

The farmers, who may have incurred as much as JD 60 million in damages, insist the government was to blame for supplying them with polluted water from the King Talal Dam and that two agencies in charge of irrigation have to take the responsibility for what happened. Beyond that, however, the farmers want to make sure that water supplies in the future do not cause similar ecological disasters.

The farmers said the polluted water destroyed at least

60,000 dunums in the Jordan Valley area, nearly 30 per cent of the total area irrigated by King Talal Dam.

The Water Authority of Jordan (WAJ), they said, released semi-treated sewage effluent from the dam to irrigated farmland in the valley destroying or severely stunting the growth of thousands of dunums of vegetable crops.

According to farmers, output level was cut to more than half and in some cases, such as the tomato crop, was totally destroyed. They estimate the loss between JD 30 million and JD 60 million.

A senior official of the Jordan Valley Authority (JVA) conceded that water pumped from the dam was polluted and resulted in damaging "many plantations." But the official, who preferred anonymity, said that "the real reason for the pollution is not yet clear." He said that a full investigation was underway. Senior officials

at the concerned ministries and departments said they were still studying the situation.

Dr. Elias Salameh, director of the Water Research and Study Centre (WRSC) at the University of Jordan, said the water quality of King Talal Dam "is so bad that it is not even suitable for irrigation or even irrigation of salt-tolerant crops."

Other experts and farmers said a decision to stop mixing Yarmouk River water with the dam water was also responsible for the present situation.

Water and Irrigation Minister Hayel Sourat said last week that the King Talal Dam water was polluted by waste dumped in the Zarqa River from factories in violation of public safety regulations. The river flows into the dam reservoir.

The minister's statement was the first public recognition of the deteriorating water quality

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Jordan Valley farmers may have suffered as much as JD 60 million in losses as a result of damages to crops caused by polluted water (J.T. file photo)

## Detained publisher released

By P.V. Vivekanand  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Authorities have released the publisher of a tabloid Arabic-language weekly who was detained over the weekend.

"I was released yesterday (Saturday), and I was told that the case is considered closed," said Dr. Riyadh Hrouh, publisher and board chairman of Shihian who was arrested in the early hours of Thursday, a few minutes before this week's edition of the tabloid was to go to press.

Dr. Hrouh said his detention and questioning was related to an interview that Shihian was publishing this week with former Petra Bank chairman Ahmad Chalabi.

Dr. Hrouh, 41, said that security men had confiscated material — tapes, films, documents and computer diskettes — related to the Chalabi interview during the raid on Shihian Thursday.

"Now I am trying to get these back and I insist that I have the right to publish the material," said Dr. Hrouh. "They (security authorities) told me that publication of the interview would have undermined the trial of Petra Bank cases coming up this week, but I believe that regardless of the trial, the right of the press and freedom of expression give me the right to publish it."

No official comment was available yesterday. But informed government sources said the detention and questioning of Dr. Hrouh had more to do with court proceedings of the Petra Bank affair itself.

"The questioning had very little to do with Dr. Hrouh's status as a publisher or journalist," said one of the sources without elaboration.

An official spokesman, quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Thursday that Dr. Hrouh was held on charges that he "made contacts and entered agreements with external parties to publish information which could harm Jordan's economic interests and undermine faith in the Kingdom's economy."

The spokesman also said that the publication of the material would have "adversely affected the conduct of justice in the case of Petra Bank."

Meanwhile, sources close to investigations into the collapse of Petra Bank in 1988 said the first formal hearing of the case was to be held Thursday, May 2.

"I expect it to be an initial session where the defendants would be formally charged," said one source. "The trials could be time-consuming, considering the multitude of aspects involved," he told the Jordan Times. "If the cases were to be tried by the civil courts, then they could drag on for years and years," said the source, preferring anonymity.

The military court which will hear the case has served notice on people to appear in court. These include Mr. Chalabi and several of his family members and relatives, former Petra Bank chief dealer Ali Sarraf, Jaafar Agha, Mr. Chalabi's nephew who occupied a prominent place in Petra

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# Transport, communications priority in rebuilding Iraq

By Serene Halasa  
Special to the Jordan Times

The writer has just returned after a three-week stay in Iraq

BAGHDAD — In the process of rebuilding what was damaged by the allied bombing of Iraq, the government is giving high priority to restoring communications and transport facilities that connect the capital to the rest of the country. But the task is not that easy to accomplish, given the continuing sanctions against Iraq.

The effort is two pronged: To use Iraq's own resources and manpower, especially that outside help and foreign equipment are not available, and to operate in a limited capacity-facilities and services that cannot be fully restored at once.

No substantial reconstruction activity was evident in Baghdad at the beginning of April, but heavy machinery was seen hard at work pulling steel and rubble from damaged buildings, especially communications buildings, towards the end of the month.

According to the Iraqi minister of communications and transport, Mr. Abdul Satar Ahmad Al Ma'eni, the devastation of the war rendered all of Iraq's vital facilities, especially communications, close to helpless. "The enemy claimed that the bombing of communication facilities were aimed at cutting the military communications. Ironically the military com-

munications survived and the civilian communications were destroyed," Mr. Ma'eni told the Jordan Times.

Following the ceasefire in early March, expert teams from different governmental departments started looking into the damage caused by the bombing and ways to restore, or even partially restore what was damaged, by utilising local resources and manpower.

For example, in Al Dora refinery, the largest oil refinery in Baghdad, a team of 1,300 men were working around the clock from the beginning of March till mid-April restoring the refinery's five main units that were destroyed during the war. The team was able to accomplish a remarkable feat by reoperating four of the five units. This accomplishment will have positive effects on the rebuilding process, as fuel is badly needed to operate machinery.

Iraqis are also using many innovative ideas to accommodate the shortage of basic materials due to the economic embargo still imposed against their country. Some of the steel that is pulled from the rubble of a damaged building is recycled and used again. Although this process would not be able to guarantee the reoperation of the facility at full capacity, it will at least provide emergency services to

the public.

Mr. Ma'eni said that his ministry was working within a fixed timetable in order to restore telephone services among governmental departments and public emergency use. "We hope that we will be able to live up to our promise to restore telephone services within the next six months," Mr. Ma'eni said.

Another sector, damaged by the allied bombing, are vital bridges. According to the undersecretary of the Housing Ministry, Sinan Abdul Malik Rasheed, rebuilding bridges that connect one governorate to another is placed at the top of the agenda. Mr. Rasheed said that the bombing of bridges, especially those outside Baghdad, have cut communication lines between one governorate and another, thus rebuilding those bridges are a main priority.

Mr. Rasheed also said that engineers and contractors from Arab countries such as Jordan and Algeria are also contributing to rebuilding some of the damaged facilities in Iraq. According to the undersecretary, a group of Jordanian contractors have shown willingness to contribute in the rebuilding of the Anbar-Ramadi expressway bridge linking Jordan with Iraq.

As the Iraqis battle with future challenges, many agree that the ongoing embargo imposed against their country since August is not justified,



The remains of a building hit in the allied bombing of Baghdad (J.T. photo)

and is severely hindering the rebuilding process. "Leaving the economic sanctions against Iraq will have its negative effects on provid-

ing construction material, which in turn will lead to our inability to provide citizens with their basic needs," Mr. Rasheed said.

"The most important thing is the will and determination to rebuild and with those available everything else is possible," Mr. Ma'eni said.

Many key bridges have been destroyed in the allied bombing of Iraq (Photo by Debbie Lovatt)

# Saudi refusal to join peace parley draws frustration

By Ruth Sinai  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The administration and Congress are smarting over Saudi Arabia's decision to sit out a U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace conference, and some senators say it smacks of ingratitude towards the Americans who "defended" the kingdom against Iraq.

Sixty-four senators have written Saudi King Fahd urging him to change his mind.

"We risked and lost American lives to assist Saudi Arabia" against a "threatened attack" by Iraq, said Sen. Bob Packwood, co-author of the senators' letter to Fahd. "Now, when we ask them to help us achieve peace and stability in the Middle East, they say 'no thanks.'"

"They welcomed our soldiers to defend their country," said the letter's other sponsor, Sen. Frank Lautenberg. Now, he added, "they act as if nothing has happened... they're as intransigent as ever."

Mr. Packwood, like President George Bush, is a Republican. Mr. Lautenberg is one of the Democrats who control Congress.

Secretary of State James Baker, who has been shuttling around the Middle East trying to set up Arab-Israeli peace talks, was chagrined by the Saudi decision, said one U.S. official who spoke only on condition of anonymity.

"He was led to hope that the Saudis were on board," said the official. Mr. Baker found out about the Saudi decision two or three weeks ago, but only revealed it last weekend, he said.

Publicly, Baker played down the importance of the Saudi position — "Which is that an Israeli-Arab peace conference should be confined to participation by Israel and its immediate Arab neigh-

bours. And Mr. Baker acknowledged that if Saudi Arabia joined, a number of other less involved Arab states might want to follow and that could make the process unwieldy.

But Saudi Arabia, while not bordering Israel, is not just any Arab country. And Israel and Americans were counting on its clout to influence the more radical members of the anti-Israel coalition.

Members of Congress and administration officials who met with Saudi leaders in recent months were under the impression that the Saudis had moderated their anti-Israel position and were cooperating with the United States, Israel's main ally.

The Saudi decision, made public earlier this week when Mr. Baker visited Jeddah, "is especially disappointing in light of impressions that Saudi Arabia... would be prepared to take new steps in the search for a Middle East peace," the senators wrote.

Several officials reported that the Saudis told them they were willing to make concessions towards Israel if the Israelis reciprocated. One suggestion made by Mr. Baker to both sides was for the Saudis to stop boycotting international companies that trade with Israel, and for the Israelis to reciprocate by freeing Palestinian prisoners and stopping Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.

The Saudi decision, made public earlier this week when Mr. Baker visited Jeddah, "is especially disappointing in light of impressions that Saudi Arabia... would be prepared to take new steps in the search for Middle East peace," the senators wrote.

"It is our strong belief that Saudi Arabia's participation in the negotiations with Israel is

indispensable for any real peace process to succeed," the senators wrote.

Mr. Baker was counting on Saudi participation to entice Israel into a two-track peace process: One to negotiate peace agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbours, another to negotiate self-rule for Palestinians under Israeli occupation.

Only one Arab country, Egypt, has signed a peace treaty with Israel. The Israelis were hoping Saudi Arabia, with its oil wealth and powerful regional position, would be the vanguard for other Arab states to sign peace accords with the Jewish state.

But the Saudis said that while they fully supported Mr. Baker's

# Autonomy for Iraq's Kurds worries Turks

By Rasit Gurdilek  
The Associated Press

ANKARA — Iraq's proposal to give its Kurds autonomy is worrying some Turkish leaders, who say it could encourage separatist sentiments among Turkey's 12 million-strong Kurdish minority.

"We have made clear that we do not want an independent Kurdish state on our border and want Iraq's territorial integrity preserved," a senior Foreign Ministry official said last week. "But what will happen in the years to come, we cannot know from now." He spoke on condition of anonymity.

Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled their homes in northern Iraq after Iraqi forces crushed their rebellion early this month.

Nearly a million are in the mountains along Turkey's border and officials were relieved when leaders of Iraq's Kurds announced last week that Baghdad said it would revive a 1970 autonomy agreement that was never carried out.

Turkey's Foreign Ministry expressed hope Friday that the Baghdad talks would lead to "the emergence of a climate which would permit Arabs, Kurds, Turks and Christians to co-exist in security within the framework of Iraq's territorial integrity."

Privately, some officials are concerned that separatist sentiments could spread among the 25 million Kurds people living in parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and the Soviet Union.

Turkey has been waging an eight-year war against guerrillas of the separatist Kurdish Workers' Party.

The heightened international interest in Kurds caused by their dramatic exodus from Iraq has alarmed many in Turkey.

Professor Snkru Gurel of Ank-

ara University, a foreign policy expert, said international calls for respect for the rights of Kurdish minorities would limit Turkey's "manoeuvring room."

He said Kurds in Iraq may eventually have so much independence that they could help supply and direct Turkey's insurgents.

Ertugrul Ozkok, a leading newspaper commentator, had a more optimistic view. He said that when the refugees are resettled in Iraq they may eventually form a loose affiliation with Turkey, "using its currency, buying its goods and watching its television."

Ozkok has close links to President Turgut Ozal, who in recent months has pushed for limited cultural rights for Kurds in Turkey as a way to weaken fight separatism. He has pushed to relax the ban on the Kurdish language and hinted that Turkey may even allow some books to be published in Kurdish.

"For the time being, Turkish officials see no reason to doubt assurances made by Western allies during the Gulf crisis that Turkey's unity would not be threatened by the creation of an autonomous region for the Kurds."

Secretary-General Hikmet Cetin of the main opposition social Democratic Populist party said Turkey had to find a solution to the problem of its own Kurds. He urged better treatment of Kurds, who constitute an overwhelming majority in 11 poor southeastern provinces that have been under a state of emergency for more than a decade.

However, Chairman Suleyman Demirel of the conservative True Path Party sees dangers in political and cultural plurality.

"You can't know where it will end once you grant special status to minorities," he said.

# Lloyd's says Kuwaiti ports cleared of ordnance

LONDON (AP) — Kuwait's two main dry cargo ports are largely clear of ordnance, but extensive damage to cranes during the Gulf war has limited the type of vessels that can be handled, a shipping service said Saturday.

Only vessels with self-unloading gear or those capable of being discharged by mobile cranes can use the ports, Lloyd's casualty reporting service said.

A salvage association carried out a detailed assessment of damage at the ports of Shuwaikh and Shaiba and the oil terminal at Mina Al Ahmadi for a Kuwait oil tanker company, Lloyd's said.

When allied troops pressed into Kuwait in March, Iraqis were alleged to have set bombs and fire to Kuwait's oil wells, shops and ports. Kuwait's ambassador to London, Ghazi Al Rayes, said it could cost \$50 billion and five years to repair the damage.

It will be several months before Shuwaikh, the most devastated port, is again operational, Lloyd's said, quoting reports from Dubai.

The channel and port have been swept for mines, and buoys that were deliberately moved into shallow water by the Iraqis were repositioned, Lloyd's said.

The surveyors said they were told by military authorities that an Iraqi missile boat had sunk in the port with at least two missiles on board.

Three of 10 cranes in the northern wharves of Shuwaikh, were toppled into the dock by explosive charges, Lloyd's said. The other cranes were put out of action by fire or bullets shot into the control systems.

Two of 16 cranes in the South-

# Travel, gasoline gladden Iraqis

By Walter Putnam  
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Government decisions to end gasoline rationing and lift a ban on foreign travel have brought traffic jams and brighter hopes to the war-ravaged Iraqi capital.

Cars on Saturday crowded the streets near bridges that survived the allied bombing during the Gulf war.

An announcement that a ban on foreign travel would end may 15 brought hope to many of a freedom untasted for years.

Both policy decisions, announced during the past week, gave a morale boost to a city bombed, beaten and suffering in the aftermath of war.

They also added to the feeling that big changes lie ahead, despite uncertainty over what course they may take.

"There is definitely a sense of a new era. But it's like looking through binoculars with a bifocal look — one optimistic, one pessimistic," said a businessman who would not give his name.

The government announced Thursday that gasoline rationing in effect since before the war would end on Sunday.

In anticipation, many cars took to the streets on Saturday and long lines appeared at fuel pumps as people sought to use the last of their ration coupons or to beat a possible rush to the gas stations on Sunday.

"This is the last coupon I have. If I don't use it, what can I do with it?" said Haadar, a student in a line of about 100 vehicles. Some drivers pushed their cars along, having already run empty. Most people have been allowed only 30 liters gasoline every 20 days. The price is 90 fils — just under one-tenth of a dinar. The currency is valued at \$3 officially and less than 20 cents on the black market.

Gasoline has been available on the black market recently for five dinars a liter, down from 10 dinars early in the war.

Increasing the supply of gasoline has been a top priority of the government, which almost daily announces progress in repairing refineries bombed during the war.

The end of rationing is expected to have a big effect on the economy.

Farmers will be better able to get produce to markets, creating larger supplies and lower prices. Consumers will be able to get around more easily.

The Friday announcement on the travel ban was good news to many Iraqis who just want to visit other countries, as well those who would like to leave for political or financial reasons.

The government lifted a years-long travel ban after the war with Iran ended in 1988 and timed it after it took over Kuwait. But there is great uncertainty about what the new freedom will allow.

The government said there will be restrictions on travel to avoid "violations of the spirit" of the decision to allow it.

This is apparently aimed at preventing an embarrassing mass migration of the type that struck Eastern European countries before the collapse of communism there.

It is also unclear which nations will allow visas to Iraqis because of past hostilities.

The businessman said many people have been saving hard currency in anticipation of the lifting of the ban.

"That's one reason the dollar has been doing so well on the black market," he said. There, the value of a dollar has risen in recent weeks from five dinars to more than seven.

"I'm not planning to travel, but many of my friends, many families plan to travel," said Gahada, a clerk in a notions shop. "Most of the people want to go for enjoyment. They haven't been able to go for more than eight years. Some of them have family, or relatives in other countries," she said.

"Right now, it is still a shock," said Amer, an engineer. He said many people who have been saying they would leave the country feel differently now that they are faced with the prospect, and would rather spend their hard currency for other things.

He said he did not think that there would be a mass migration even if it was possible. "People would like to have a break, if you like, see relatives, friends, the outside world," he said.

The exchange of money will be a problem because of the weakness of the dinar, Amer said.

One man suggested that officials may believe those who want to leave for good would be "troublemakers" anyway.

For Farji, a woman living in a shack on government land with a disabled husband and five children 12 and under, leaving is out of the question. They are living now on a pension of 75 dinars a month.

"All people are much concerned with allowing travel," she said, but added: "My situation and my condition will not allow me to travel."

# U.S. sailors involved in fracas with Bahrain taxicab drivers

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — Six U.S. sailors aboard the USS Blue Ridge, currently en route to its home port in Japan, might be brought to trial for a midnight brawl with Bahrain taxicab drivers, a U.S. navy spokesman said.

The brawl, in which plank-wielding U.S. sailors were said to be demanding preferential treatment "for liberating Kuwait," resulted in the injury of three of the drivers, one seriously, and damage to 10 cars.

It occurred Monday night, less than 40 hours before the blue ridge sailed away from Bahrain after a nine-month deployment to the Gulf as the command vessel for navy forces supporting Operation Desert Storm.

Speaking from his hospital bed, right arm and right leg in plaster, 35-year-old driver Ali Abdullah Al Makki said it first a small argument because five American sailor

were insisting on riding a cab for four passengers. "One of the Americans insulted one of my friends, other taxi drivers interfered and a small clash happened but no one got hurt," he said. The parking area was in Juffrah, close to the American support unit land facility for the navy, and one of the drivers used his car telephone to ask for American help. The sailors left after 45 minutes, the first five and about 11 of their friends came back to the taxi stop with planks and started to attack the taxi drivers and their cars. Makki said "They broke my arm and my leg. When I started to creep away, two of the Americans hit my head with a plank. I fell unconscious," Makki said. He showed stitches on his head and said his back was all bruised.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 77311-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
18:00	La Belle Anglaise
19:00	News in French
19:15	Weekly Sports Magazine
19:30	News in Hebrew
20:00	News in Arabic
20:30	Empty Nest
21:00	Inside Story
22:00	News in English
22:30	Derrick
PRAYER TIMES	
04:23	Fajr
05:48	(Sunrise) Dhuh
11:53	Dhuhr
16:12	'Asr
19:18	Maghrib
20:43	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terzianian Church Tel. 623666	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771231	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751	
Assyrian International Church Tel. 685726	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 518817, 654932	
The Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Another rise in temperatures will occur and some clouds will appear at different altitudes. Winds will be southeasterly moderate to fresh, causing dust in desert areas. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly fresh and seas wavy.	
Amman ..... 17 / 33	
Aqaba ..... 22 / 39	
Desert ..... 17 / 36	
Jordan Valley ..... 19 / 39	
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 31, Aqaba 37. Humidity readings:	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR	
AMMAN 33 per cent. Aqaba 20 per cent.	
USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS	
NIGHT DUTY	
-AMMAN-	
Dr. Muhammad Manna	741444
Dr. Aswad Al Haj	771020
Dr. Abdul Aziz Taboun	783708
Dr. Youssef Sammour	615648
Fires pharmacy	661912
Pedrows pharmacy	778356
Al Asama pharmacy	637033
Al Salam pharmacy	626672
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisni pharmacy	637660
-IRBID-	
Dr. Hani Barham	(-)
Al Shamsi pharmacy	273623
EMERGENCIES	
Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate	630341
Rescue	199
Civil Defence Emergency	637111
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	891228
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630321
Complaints	605800
Hotel Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage	(-)
Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality	(-)
HOSPITALS	
AMMAN:	
Hussain Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Talal Amman Maternity	642412
Maltes, J. Amman	636140
PALESTINE, SHMEISNI:	
Shmeisni Hospital	661171/4
University Hospital	669131
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Mutajess	771012/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775112/26
Army, Marja	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Amal Hospital	674155
ZARQA:	
Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)83323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
DRBID:	
Francisco Beama Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272775
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital	(02)247100
AQABA:	
Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111
FOR THE TRAVELLER	

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53300-5, where it should always be verified.	
ARRIVALS	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
08:20	Dhahran (RJ)
10:15	Jeddah, Samsa (RJ)
10:45	Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:00	Larnaca, Damascus (RJ)
17:30	Riyadh (RJ)
17:45	Cairo (RJ)
19:30	Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
14:05	Bahrain (GF)
20:05	Cairo (MS)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
12:00	Riyadh (RJ)
12:30	Montreal, New York (RJ)
13:05	Cairo (RJ)
20:45	Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
21:30	Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
14:05	Bahrain (GF)
20:05	Cairo (MS)
MARKET PRICES	
Uppermarket prices in fils per kg.	
Apple	850 / 750
Banana	500 / 450
Banana (Mukammal)	450 / 400
Broad beans	320 / 250
Cabbage	300 / 250
Carrot	180 / 120
Cauliflower	220 / 150
Cucumbers (large)	140 / 100
Cucumbers (small)	300 / 250
Dates	360 / 300
Eggplant	1000 / 900
Garlic	350 / 250
Grapes	240 / 18



## Cement factory expects \$60m income in 1991

TAFIEH (J.T.) — The Jordan Cement Factory Company (JCFC), announced Sunday that its production for 1991 was bound to earn the Kingdom \$60 million through the sale of cement to a host of countries in the Arab World and Asia.

Hatem Halawani, the company's director general, said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that nearly two million tonnes of cement were to be sold to Yemen and Sudan as well as Taiwan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and other countries in the south east Asian region in addition to Finland, in Europe.

The total sales of cement last year amounted to 1.4 million tonnes, Mr. Halawani said in a statement during his visit to cement plants in the southern regions of the country.

Referring to the Rashidieh plant, in southern Jordan, Mr. Halawani said that production was at full capacity, at the rate of 6,000 tonnes of cement daily, but he said an additional quantity of cement would be produced gradually, thanks to the recent improvements introduced to the production lines at the plant.

The Rashidieh plant this year employed 200 local workers who were given special training at the factory to carry out the various types of jobs.

The company, which operates a major plant near the town of Fuhais, west of here, has a registered capital of JD 50,000,000.

According to Mr. Halawani, the company has now drawn up a new plan designed to increase the cement production at all its plants in the country so as to increase exports.

## Hurd expected on second visit to Amman

AMMAN (J.T.) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd is due here Thursday from Cairo on a two-day visit to Jordan on the second leg of a tour of the Middle East region, according to an official announcement by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

This will be Mr. Hurd's second visit to Jordan during 1991, and it is designed to discuss with Jordanian officials developments in the region and prospects for peace in the Middle East.

His visit comes close on the heels of a tour by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker who visited Arab capitals and Moscow to discuss peace prospects.

According to Petra, Mr. Hurd

will hold meetings with Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri and other government officials, and his visit will be in the course of a tour which takes him to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in addition to Jordan.

In another announcement, Petra said that a six-member Italian parliamentary delegation, representing the opposition leftist party, will come here, on Thursday on a four-day visit for talks with government officials on issues of common interest.

The team, which will be led by Achille Occhetto who heads Italy's democratic leftist opposition group, is to include several Italian journalists.

## Jordan, Yemen to discuss ties

AMMAN (J.T.) — Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Iryani is due in Amman Monday on a two-day visit during which he will meet His Majesty King Hussein to deliver a message from Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, according to an announcement by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

Mr. Iryani is expected to hold meetings with his Jordanian counterpart Taher Al Masri to discuss Yemeni-Jordanian relations and developments in the Arab World as well as issues of common concern to the two countries, Petra said.

Prime Minister Mudar Badran visited Yemen in March last year, at the head of a Jordanian side, to the joint Jordanian-Yemeni

Higher Committee which discussed bilateral cooperation.

A trade agreement was reached, during the visit, on promoting economic and trade exchanges, holding a Jordanian industrial exhibition in Sanaa, and increasing the number of Jordanian teachers working in Yemen to 1,000 during 1991.

Over the past three months, Jordan purchased nearly 200,000 tonnes of Yemeni crude oil after several Jordanian tankers, carrying crude from Iraq, were hit in allied raids.

Jordan's imports of crude oil from Yemen in addition to those from Syria are calculated at international market rates in contrast with those earlier purchased from Iraq at reduced rates.

## Jordan attends WHO meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan last week took part in the meetings of the Consultative Committee for Health Research of the "World Health Organisation's Eastern Mediterranean region, held in Alexandria.

Ministry of Health Secretary General Adnan Abbas, who represented Jordan, said that the two day meetings had tackled reports on progress of health research in the East Mediterranean region, diseases in hot areas, research on health systems.

He said that the committee discussed a number of working

papers on environmental sanitation, injuries and accidents.

The committee adopted recommendations stressing the importance of initiating and developing research centres in the region and supporting research institutions in the East Mediterranean region.

The recommendations also reiterated the need for encouraging applied research, particularly in relations to developing health systems in view of the importance of such systems in improving the performance of health services and covering larger sectors of population.



QUEEN OPENS CULTURAL WEEK: Yarmouk University Sunday opened a week-long cultural event with a celebration held under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor. The Queen listened to an address, at the opening ceremony, by university President Ali Mahafza, who paid tribute to the Queen for her support to the university's endeavours. The Queen later inaugurated the new television and radio studios operated by the Department of Journalism. The studios are expected to serve as a nucleus for a radio and television centre for the northern regions of the country, operating in cooperation

with the Ministry of Information and its affiliated agencies. The Queen also opened Yarmouk University museum which exhibits newspapers, photographs and other materials depicting various aspects of development in Jordan over the past 50 years. The Queen later met with students who publish the university newspaper, and was briefed on the publication processes, and opened an exhibition of maps which will also be housed at the museum. During the week-long cultural event, three seminars will be held at the university and students can watch documentary films.

## Minister urges solution to excesses on state-owned land

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Mohammad Adhoub Al Zaben Sunday called for finding a comprehensive and drastic solution to the problem of excesses on state land and for holding an extended meeting at the ministry to discuss the various dimensions of this problem and make the necessary recommendations to the Cabinet.

During a visit to the Zarqa Municipality, the minister pointed out that the government, intended to implement an environmental strategy in which all sectors would take part.

He decided to set up an engineering team to work out a solution to the state-owned land problem, in preparation for submitting it to the local, provincial and higher committees.

The minister also decided to set-up a special committee, grouping people from the Environment Department, Zarqa Health Department, Zarqa Municipality and the Water Au-

thority, to deal with the waste water from industries and factories in Zarqa Governorate.

He also called for the formation of a committee, to be chaired by the governor, to follow up on all environmental and municipal issues and propose solutions to any environmental problems.

The committee will group members of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament from Zarqa constituency, as well as Zarqa and Russafa mayors.

Mr. Zaben noted that random construction and accumulated excesses had contributed to minimising the municipality's resources, thus making it incumbent on all parties concerned to work out a comprehensive solution for the state land and to collect the fees due from citizens in the governorate.

The minister also called for finding a new garbage dumping site.

Zarqa Governor Mohammad Hussein Shobaki summarised the problems facing the various

municipalities in the governorate, saying that such problems include excesses on state land, random construction of buildings without licences. He noted that 60,000 houses, inhabited by 120,000 people in Russafa and Zarqa were built in violation of the organisation rules.

Zarqa Mayor Yasser Al Omari briefed the minister on the services offered by the municipality and reviewed the obstacles facing it.

He said that the major problem facing the municipality was that 50 per cent of the city's total area of 65 square kilometres was not organised.

He added that there were a large number of unlicensed shops in the city. He called for modernising the organisational plan of the city, for reconsidering the municipal laws and solving the land appropriation problems.

The minister visited Russafa Municipality, where he was briefed by its Mayor Mousa Al Saad on its projects and activities.

## Jordan seeks to increase exports to non-Arab markets

By Rana Sabbagh  
Reuters

JORDAN WANTS to increase exports to the United States, Europe and North Africa to compensate for lost trade with its traditional partners in the Gulf. Trade Minister Ziad Fariz said.

Oil-rich Gulf states are giving trade preference to the countries which participated in the U.S.-led alliance that drove Iraq from Kuwait in February. Kuwait is also harrasing Jordanian goods.

Mr. Fariz said in an interview with Reuters on Thursday that the government had earmarked JD 14 million to improve the marketing of Jordanian goods.

"We hope that the Saudi Arabian market will soon open up to our agricultural and industrial goods," he said.

Jordan sold Saudi Arabia

goods worth JD 48 million in 1989.

Mr. Fariz said Jordan, with a list of 500 export items, was targeting North Africa by reactivating old trade protocols.

A Libyan trade team visited Jordan last month and bought textiles worth \$3.5 million.

Jordan's main exports are phosphates, cement, textiles and farm produce.

The Gulf crisis cost Jordan more than \$1.5 billion. The economy particularly suffered because of Amman's adherence to a U.N. economic embargo on Iraq which accounted for 25 per cent of Jordan's exports.

Local businessmen are banking on becoming Iraq's main trade link with the world once the U.N. Sanctions Committee lifts the embargo on Iraq.

Iraqi businessmen are in Jordan with lists to buy everything from tomatoes to tractors.

Mr. Fariz said his main objective was to earn increased hard currency through exports and attract local, Arab and foreign investments.

Jordan is implementing an International Monetary Fund (IMF) recovery plan to narrow its budget and trade deficits.

Mr. Fariz said an average of 70 people, mostly Jordanians who fled Kuwait during the Gulf crisis, referred to his ministry every day to ask about investment opportunities.

More than 200,000 Jordanians returned home after the crisis, putting pressure on Jordan's depleted resources. But many of them intend to set up businesses in Jordan once they get their money back from Kuwaiti banks.

## King, Egyptian journalist discuss Arab situation

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received at the Royal Court the well-known Egyptian journalist Mohammad Hassanein Haikal and had a lengthy discussion with him on the current Arab situation and future prospects.

The audience was attended by Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker and King Hussein's Political Advisor Adnan Abn Odeh.

The renowned Egyptian journalist and former chief editor of the widely-circulated Egyptian newspaper Al Ahran Sunday described the efforts currently made by the United States to solve the Middle East question as public relations efforts rather than serious political efforts.

In an interview with Jordan Television, following an audience he had with the King, Mr. Haikal

said the American efforts were aimed at convincing Arabs, truly or falsely, that the United States is moving towards finding a peaceful solution to the Middle East issues and the Palestine question.

He said that the American efforts were aimed at pacifying Arab feelings. "I think there is no political move as such, but rather an American attempt to pacify the feelings of the Arabs," he said. "The state we are seeing in front of us is closer to a state of public relations than to a serious effort to find a solution to the Middle East problems," Mr. Haikal added.

"There will be no political solution for any problem if a balance of power is not there," he said. He said that a balance of power could bring about a balanced

solution and that the current situation was providing the worst timing to talk about a peaceful solution.

Asked about the current Arab situation, Mr. Haikal said that the Arab entity was divided and that it would take a long, long time before it could be resurrected again.

On the reasons behind his current visit to Jordan, Mr. Haikal pointed out that he was in the process of writing a book on the Gulf war and Gulf crisis for Collins and Harper editors.

"I came here to interview His Majesty King Hussein in his capacity as a major party who watched the crisis closely and took part in all contacts aimed at ensuring a peaceful end to it."

He described his talks with the King as frank and clear.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday holds talks with a visiting Canadian delegation (Petra photo)

## Prince Hassan calls for increased cooperation with Canada

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Sunday called for expanding the scope of cooperation between Jordan and the Petro-Canada International Agency for Cooperation (PCIAC) to help the Kingdom prospects for oil and natural gas and enable Jordan to exploit shale to produce oil.

Jordan is struggling to promote its natural and human resources to pursue the goals of development and deal with the adverse consequences of the Gulf crisis.

The Crown Prince said at a meeting with a visiting five-member delegation from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) led by Susan Laporte, the agency's Middle East Bureau Director.

In reviewing developments in the Middle East, Crown Prince Hassan said that Jordan had been flooded by 240,000 returnees from Kuwait and other Gulf states during the Gulf crisis, which had a severe impact on the national economy.

The Crown Prince said that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and United Na-

tions Agencies could and should play a leading role in reducing the negative effects of the crisis on Jordan and in improving the condition of the Arab population in Jordan and the Israeli occupied Arab territories.

The Crown Prince called for unified efforts and research work, designed to promote cooperation among the countries of the Arab and African regions so as to overcome problems of poverty and need.

He also proposed the idea of organising Arab-Canadian meetings on regular basis to discuss scopes of cooperation.

Mrs. Laporte said that her visit was a first step to define Jordan's needs prior to charting plans for coordinating assistance to the Kingdom, especially in the water and energy fields, and to help the country promote human resources potentials.

Prospects for Jordanian exports to Canada and Canada's contributions to develop the Jordanian agricultural, water, communications, tourism, and energy sectors were discussed

during Mrs. Laporte's visit which ends Monday.

The CIDA team visited the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF) for a briefing on the centre's marketing activities.

Centre staff provided a tour of the facilities, which include a wholesale showroom, a sample workshop for the production of prototypes, and a management training unit.

The delegation discussed the centre's role in promoting handicrafts in Jordan through a market-oriented, business approach combined with management training at the grass roots level.

The centre has broadened the international market for handicrafts by appealing to buyers of home furnishings, decorative accessories, and general gifts.

The embassy of Canada in Amman has supported the centre through a grant for weaving production in Al Hashimiyya and for the establishment of a fully equipped sewing operation in Nuzha.

## University opens training courses

AMMAN (J.T.) — University of Jordan President Mahmoud Al Samra Sunday opened two training courses on seeds and seed production, organised by the International Centre of Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), in cooperation with the Faculty of Agriculture, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Agriculture Ministry and the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO).

Addressing the participants, Dr. Samra stressed the important contribution researchers and agricultural workers can make to increase production and consequently meet the basic needs of people.

He referred to the imbalance between the world population and the available resources, saying that the population is on the increase, while the area of arable land is diminishing.

"Alerted by this fact, the university had established the seed technology unit at the university to provide training and rehabilitation services in the fields of producing good quality seeds," the president said.

Dr. Samra stressed on the existing cooperation between the university, GTZ and ICARDA.

The GTZ representative highlighted the role played by GTZ in improving agriculture in the developing countries through training and rehabilitating agricultural personnel.

Also addressing the opening session was ICARDA representative Tony Vangestral, who noted the existing cooperation

between the university and ICARDA in the agricultural field.

The courses aim at training participants on technical and scientific methods for ensuring improved, disease-free seeds.

Taking part in the ten-day courses are 30 participants from Jordan, Syria, Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Cyprus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Turkey and Pakistan.

## WHAT'S GOING ON

### EXHIBITION

- ★ Exhibition of fine handicrafts, weavings, quilts, on Friday, at the Abu Jaber estate-Yadoudah (open: 10 a.m.-9 p.m.)
- ★ Dried flowers exhibition by Hind Kurdi Nuweiran at the Royal Cultural Centre.

### BAZAAR

- ★ Bazaar displaying artificial flowers, costumes, scientific books, children's toys and paintings at the University of Jordan.

### FILMS

- ★ French film entitled "Les nuits de la pleine lune" at the French Cultural Centre 8:00 p.m.
- ★ Feature film entitled "Zardoz" at the British Council — 8:00 p.m.

## New food coupons to be distributed

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Supply has made arrangements for the distribution of new food coupons to Jordanian citizens enabling them to purchase milk, rice and sugar at subsidised prices.

According to ministry officials, the distribution, which begins at the start of the coming month, will be carried out through a number of centres in each governorate, and the new coupons have a different design from those of the first four months of 1991.

Each Jordanian citizen is entitled to buy limited amounts of

sugar, rice and powdered milk at subsidised prices and any amount at market prices.

Each citizen can buy one and a half kilograms of rice, one and a half kilograms of sugar, a month and one kilogramme of powdered milk every four months at the subsidised prices which are almost half the market prices.

The food coupons were introduced at the early stage of the Gulf crisis, last year, and the Ministry of Supply said that the measure was necessary to control the sale of food supplies and prevent hoarding and smuggling of basic food commodities to other countries.

## JUST holds scientific week

RAMTHA (Petra) — Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) Acting President Fayez Al Khasawneh opened Sunday the third scientific week of the university's Engineering Faculty.

Acting Dean of the Engineer-

ing Faculty Dr. Mohammad Al Shayyah delivered an opening address in which he stressed the importance of such activities in the university and their role in bolstering cooperation between the various establishments and the university.

## New antiquities' chief outlines ambitious plans

By Elia Nasrallah  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Department of Antiquities will expand its contacts with the public for the sake of boosting interest in archaeological places in Jordan, and will direct its attention towards students at schools, community colleges and universities to involve the young generation in cultural activities related to the Kingdom and its history, according to Dr. Safwan Tal, the new director general of the Department of Antiquities.

The department's plan will also entail measures to provide protection to the archaeological sites that abound in Jordan, and education will be provided to the children at school through seminars and the media to orient them on means of protecting these sites and encourage visits to them, said Dr. Tal who succeeded Dr. Ghazi Bisheh to the post.

"We want the members of the public to visit the archaeological sites in the



Safwan Tal

Kingdom, to learn about the country's history and culture, since our drive will be to promote culture," said Dr. Tal in a statement to the Jordan Times following his appointment to the post.

Dr. Tal, who has served for almost 20 years as professor, teaching at the Archaeological Department of the faculty of Arts at the University of Jordan, had earlier worked, for a period of 10 years, at the Department of Antiquities.

He said he would try to promote the Department of Antiquities' contacts with all

Jordanian universities and other educational institutions in the course of promoting the Kingdom's history and culture.

Dr. Tal, who obtained his degrees in Istanbul and New York, said that his department would be enlisting the help of well trained cadres to carry out a long term programme for the development of the Department of Antiquities' services and activities in Jordan and its contacts with Arab and foreign organisations.

"Such a team is needed for the work because our aim is to promote the cultural values of the antiquities found in Jordan and the Arab World at large," said Dr. Tal.

Dr. Tal said that special coordination would be conducted with the ministries of information, education and tourism in the course of implementing the department's activities.

Dr. Bisheh had resigned his post and was retired, Dr. Tal was appointed as his successor by a Council of Ministers' decision.



## Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation  
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Editor-in-Chief:  
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## Appalled at apathy

A "REPORT" in London's Observer newspaper that Iraq is secretly rearming itself and rebuilding its arms industry comes at a time the whole world knows very well that the country is at pains to feed its own people, who are suffering from the devastating consequences of the allied war against it. Western doctors and relief officials have spoken volumes about the perils of water and food situation and the looming threat of epidemics in Baghdad and other cities and towns of Iraq, posing one of the major challenges to the entire international community, or at least to those who are pained to see the suffering of a people deprived of basic essentials in life.

One cannot but say that such a "report," which also seeks to implicate Jordan despite the Kingdom's strict adherence to the international embargo and sanctions against Iraq except those related to humanitarian areas, only aims at self-aggrandisement and perpetuating media sensationalism.

We are even surprised that the Iraqi government took the trouble of denying the "report," particularly that we have seen enough and more of the kind in the past. If anything, such reports have contributed to a large extent to bringing about the Gulf war. Indeed, one has also to say that London's Sunday newspapers are not exactly known for writing gossips.

However, one would have thought and hoped that such misguided and illogical reports — which, no doubt, find currency with some of governments still appearing to grind an axe with the Arabs — had come to an end and turned towards more realism and logic, now that most Middle Eastern issues appear to be coming to a head. But no, they have to continue the point that the food lifeline of an entire people could be dangerously exposed to the whims and fancies of external forces, which have their own agenda in this part of the world.

We are not naive enough to expect sincere portrayals of the reality of the situation in Iraq in the post-war era since it appears to have become a self-adopted rule for at least some that any mention of the bulk of the Iraqi people who are suffering within their homes, away from the borders of Turkey and Iraq, will be seen as "supporting" the Iraqi government.

The Observer report, to say the least, lacks compassion for the 16 million or so Iraqis who seem to have been forgotten by the international community, whose focus has been very conveniently shifted to the plight of the Kurds on the Turkish border and others on the Iranian border. We share the concern and sympathy for the Kurds and other refugees, but we are appalled at the apathy that we see when it comes extending help to the rest of the Iraqi people.

Reports as those carried by the Observer do not serve the cause of helping a people who are in dire need of help. On the contrary they only contribute to continued denial in a people of the means to survive.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker has barely left the region for home when Israel's Defence Minister Moshe Arens declared that the secretary's talks with Israeli leaders did not achieve anything, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. Arens also announced that the peace process should be very slow because the Arab countries are not in a hurry to arrive at peace, the paper added. Arens, like other Israeli leaders, announced that he was opposed to the idea of a regional conference which was discussed by Baker and Levy, the foreign minister, thus closing all the doors for Baker's initiative to make a headway, the paper continued. It said that even the five-point agreement reportedly reached between Levy and Baker falls far short of meeting the Arab demands, because it did not tackle the substance of the Palestine problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict, the paper noted. It said that the two ministers' plan avoided any mention of Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab lands and avoided mentioning the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the future of the Holy City of Jerusalem. The two directed their attention instead to water problems of the region, economic development and questions of disarmament, the paper said. The talks between Baker and Levy and those between Baker and Arens have therefore, achieved nothing as, Israel has been hoping, and at the same time left Washington impotent, unable to impose on Israel what it did on Iraq with which it even refused to hold a dialogue over the occupation of Kuwait, the paper argued. This is clear double standard policy on the part of the United States, said the paper, and the reported Baker-Levy plan can only be described as an attempt to place the cart before the horse, thus aborting any solution to the Arab-Israeli question and the Palestine problem.

There is no doubt that the Iraqi Kurdish agreement declared last week is a big achievement for both sides and is expected to help put an end to foreign intervention in Iraq's internal affairs, says a columnist in Al Ra'i daily Sunday. The agreement is a revival of a pact signed by the two sides in 1970, designed to give the Kurds greater autonomy rule within their own region in northern Iraq, says the columnist Mahmoud Al Risaawi. The only alternative to such agreement is of course, continued attrition of the Iraqis and the Kurds on the part of the Western forces which would like to see the Arab World dismembered, the writer notes. He says that as long as the agreement is bound to bring benefits to the Kurdish people, their leaders ought now to take the initiative and call for an immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraqi soil. These forces have come under the pretext of offering food and shelter to the Kurds who fled to the mountains, but they are there in fact to consecrate foreign presence on Iraqi soil, warns the writer. He says that the presence of the foreign forces in Iraq contradicts a statement by President Bush in which he considered the agreement with the Kurds as a positive move. The writer expresses the view that the Iraqi-Kurdish deal has shaken the ground under the neighbouring countries which have Kurdish minorities and their Western allies who have decided to abort Baghdad's moves to reestablish security in the country.

## Baker has little to show after miles of diplomacy

By Barry Schweid  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Three trips and some 50,000 miles later, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker isn't even close to setting up a Mideast peace conference.

Never one to waste his time on lost causes, Baker will have to decide with U.S. President George Bush this week whether to surrender to what he called at the outset the most intractable of all disputes — the Arab-Israeli conflict — or to keep going.

When Baker left Israel Friday, his talks cut short by the death of his mother, he aimed a parting shot at Israel for not giving ground on the two key issues: Whether the United Nations would have a role in peace talks and which Palestinians might attend.

Unless he gets answers to those questions, Baker said in a statement, he might simply give up. That was a sudden turnaround. Earlier Friday, Baker had spoken of making progress and of receiving "some positive responses" from Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy.

A shrewd politician with a keen sense of the other fellow's weak spots, Baker made use of the departure statement to scare Israel and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir into yielding on the U.N. and Palestinian issues.

After all, the statement carries an implicit threat in saying Bush and Baker will "determine appropriate next steps in the search for Middle East peace."

That could mean the unveiling of a Bush plan expressly telling Israel what it ought to do to have peace with the Arabs.

Bush, in a speech to Congress last month, said a settlement should be based on Israel trading

territory for peace. But he didn't try to dictate the terms of a settlement.

Should he declare, for instance, that Israel must give up all the territory it occupied in the 1967 war, the Arabs would have the president in their corner and Israel could be isolated diplomatically.

His past description of Arab Jerusalem as occupied territory also made the Israelis nervous. Back in 1974, when Israel rejected a demand for a pull back to Sinai from another secretary of state, Henry A. Kissinger, a reappraisal of U.S. policy towards Israel was announced.

That raised the spectre of a cut in U.S. aid to Israel or some other punishment. Israel relented, Kissinger went back to the Middle East and an

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agreement was reached.

Baker, however, is dealing with Yitzhak Shamir, a tough-minded survivor who does not yield easily when he considers Israel's interests to be at risk.

"I sincerely hope that pressure is not the issue," Shamir said in an interview before Baker flew to occupied Jerusalem. "Anyone who knows Israel knows that pressure does not yield flexibility — just the opposite."

If Shamir weren't difficult enough, Baker also has to cope with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad.

Assad is determined to recover the Golan Heights, promote the Palestinians in their grievances against Israel and engage the United Nations in the peace talks.

Syrian Foreign Minister

Farouq Sharaa accused Israel of "talking about war rather than talking about peace — and dragging the region into war."

Baker was never eager to board the Middle East shuttle. Only 10 months ago he had told the parties: "When you're serious about peace, call us."

But that was before the Gulf war.

Bush and Baker had turned down Iraq's demand that they take up the Palestinian question simultaneously with its occupation of Kuwait.

However, Bush said an end to the occupation would create new opportunities for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the turmoil in Lebanon.

Baker was on his way to the Middle East a month after U.S. and allied troops pushed the Iraqis out of Kuwait.

Baker and his top aides insisted the war had changed the picture in the Middle East and made it possible for Israel and the Arabs to negotiate peace terms.

There was a "window of opportunity," Baker said repeatedly on his three trips to the area. And only last Thursday, at a joint news conference with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander A. Bessmertnykh in Kislovodsk, Baker declared: "My honest feeling remains that there is a genuine desire on the part of the parties for peace."

But the very next day, Baker was headed for home, declaring he needed some answers from the Israelis "before we can move this process forward."

In fact, the process could be at a dead end.

Editor's note: Barry Schweid has covered the twists and turns in U.S. Mideast policy for the Associated Press for 18 years.

## U.S. secretary looks for peace and says view hazy

By Carol Giacomo  
Reuters

WASHINGTON — Towards the end of his third Mideast peace mission, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker climbed a foothill in the Soviet Caucasus mountains to look at the panoramic view.

In an unusual lighthearted exchange with reporters there, the secretary was asked if he saw clearly now the path to Middle East peace.

"I can see it as clearly as you can see Mount Elbruz," replied Baker, laughing. As he gazed across the valley, the mountain ahead was enveloped in a haze.

It was an apt comparison to Baker's peacemaking, which has yet to yield any apparent breakthrough. If real progress has been made during 30 days on the road in the last seven weeks, it is obscured by the secretary's secretive style of mediation.

Publicly, Baker retains some optimism. "My honest feeling remains that there is a genuine desire on the part of the parties for peace," he said near the end of the 12-day trip, mostly to the Middle East, that ended on Friday.

This may have been true when Baker launched the latest effort to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict in early March after the U.S.-led coalition pushed Iraq out of Kuwait.

But as time passes, chances of stirring a new dynamic in this centuries-old tribal conflict seem to fade.

Key parties cannot even agree whether and under what conditions to attend a peace conference, promoted by Washington

as a way to bring Israel and Arabs into direct talks.

Baker, who left Israel obviously dissatisfied Friday, said he did not know if he would make another Middle East swing. That will be decided with President George Bush, who seems keener than Baker about keeping U.S. shuttle diplomacy alive.

Israel, contravening U.N. resolutions and ignoring world opinion, continues to reject trading Arab lands it occupies for peace. It also is building new settlements that will make it increasingly difficult to give up the occupied territories.

Israel agreed in principle to attend a peace conference and softened its conditions somewhat during Baker's visit. But it has refused to budge on a role for the United Nations and on Palestinian representation.

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Saudi Arabia, which the U.S. defended during the Gulf war, had raised expectations that it would break tradition afterwards and move towards peace with Israel. But Saudi leaders said last week while they supported the idea of peace conference, they would not attend one.

It is now clear that conference participation has been scaled down to envision — at the most — only Palestinians, Israel and Jordan, Egypt and Syria.

It took Baker three trips to secure Egypt's public pledge to join the conference — and Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel.

His Majesty King Hussein gave no public commitment on a peace conference, but told reporters: "We are looking very open-mindedly at everything."

Baker also failed to reach

agreement with Syria, Israel's implacable foe and a crucial player in any peace process. Syria insists on, and Israel opposes, an important conference role for the United Nations so trading land for peace will be guaranteed.

Baker, who is known to hate to lose, is becoming impatient with the lack of significant progress. He had tried once before, in 1989-90, to make Arab-Israeli peace and failed.

So desperate was Baker for a positive outcome from the trip he flew on short notice to Kislovodsk in the Caucasus region to meet Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh.

Formal announcement of the Soviet co-sponsorship of the peace conference presumably should have been a highlight of Baker's travels, but even that did not come easily.

Bessmertnykh had to be asked several times by reporters before he stated unequivocally: "We intend to act as sponsors." The incident suggested Moscow was less than enthusiastic.

On the way home from Israel, Baker seemed to lay the burden on Israel for forward movement. But there was no evidence he had received any significant concessions from the Arabs either.

What will happen next is anyone's guess. Bush and Baker could allow the initiative to fade away. They could decide Baker will return to the region for one last mission. They could go public with whatever tentative concessions Baker has won and let the world judge who squandered this opportunity for peace.

What is clear is that Baker is not the type to allow himself to be a pawn in a Middle East political ping-pong game as some say his predecessor George Shultz became in 1988.

## Israeli cabinet squabbles

(Continued from page 1)

conference that raised a weekend storm in Israel, culminating in disagreements in Sunday's cabinet meeting.

According to Israeli news reports, Mr. Shamir took Foreign Minister David Levy to task for suggesting Israel might consider reconvening the conference every six months to hear progress reports on talks with individual Arab states.

Mr. Levy defended himself on Israel army radio, saying his critics were backing out on what had already been agreed on by Israeli leaders.

There is nothing I brought up to Mr. Baker during our talks that was not known to the prime minister, and all these cries of despair, all those who are getting cold feet, can not distort the picture," Mr. Levy said.

"Everything was coordinated. Everything was done with the prime minister's knowledge," he said.

Asked who was getting cold feet, Mr. Levy said: "Right now I do not want to go into addresses. In any case I had a good talk with the prime minister."

Mr. Levy insisted he had not agreed to an international peace conference, but Economics Minister David Magen told state-owned television that the United States was pushing for such a meeting.

"I am afraid that the U.S. is trying to lead us in a circumvented way in an international conference under U.N. auspices," he said.

Mr. Levy suggested cabinet colleagues were overlooking potential Israeli gains in return for joining an open-ended conference, such as limitations on what the conference could discuss.

But Mr. Shamir, who effectively controls Israeli foreign policy, told Israeli radio before the cabinet meeting that he would not accept Mr. Levy's view.

"We are opposed to that because if there are subsequent sessions of the same meeting or conference, we'll never get to direct negotiations," he said. Mr. Shamir said Arab states backed the U.S. proposal to avoid direct talks with Israel.

He said the current disagreement would not be the last between the United States and Israel on peace efforts.

"There are other differences of opinion that we haven't yet touched upon. Not only issues of procedure, but also of substance," Mr. Shamir said.

Far-right members of Mr. Shamir's cabinet threatened to leave his government if a regional conference was more than a one-off opening session immediately followed by direct talks.

They fear an open-ended session could end as an international conference under U.N. auspices.

"There is no international conference, and not even a beginner in diplomacy or politics could make such a comparison," retorted Mr. Levy, who became foreign minister last June.

Mr. Shamir has vowed not to give up the occupied territories even though Washington envisages a settlement based on Israel trading land for peace.

Mr. Baker cut short his talks with Israeli leaders on Friday to fly home after learning of the death of his 96-year-old mother.

Israeli media quoted reports from abroad on Sunday saying the United States blamed the Jewish state for the lack of progress in its peace efforts and might impose sanctions on Israel.

which it gives \$3 billion a year in aid.

Mr. Shamir also said Sunday his country achieved the United States' help to achieve peace in the Middle East but said putting pressure on Israel would lead nowhere.

"I think the United States very clearly has no intention to apply pressure or impose solutions," Mr. Shamir was quoted as saying in an interview with Spain's El Pais newspaper. "This sort of thing could not bring peace."

The conference can succeed only if all regional leaders realise "that peace is possible and that we all have to contribute something important to achieve it," he told El Pais.

Mr. Shamir said Israel wanted peace and hoped that the United States would help it towards that goal.

But he denied that Israel, which receives annual aid of over \$3 billion from the United States, was Washington's "spoiled child."

"We aren't a child and we aren't the United States' children. Americans are much younger than we are," he said.

"We are ready to cooperate with the United States but we don't always agree with them on every single issue."

In Mondorf, Luxembourg, French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said Saturday he had asked Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat not to obstruct U.S. efforts to set up a Middle East peace conference.

"I suggested to the PLO chairman (that he should exercise) moderation, that he should take the U.S. proposal for a regional conference openly and that he should put the least possible obstacles in its way," Mr. Dumas told reporters.

Speaking after the first day of an informal weekend meeting of European Community foreign ministers, he said the 11 others had not accused him of breaching an EC agreement not to talk to the PLO.

The French minister, who met Mr. Arafat in Libya Monday, added: "My partners listened very attentively and thanked me for the information I gave them. There was no criticism."

Mr. Dumas, the most senior French official to visit Tripoli in years, also met Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

Mr. Dumas described his visit to Libya and Egypt this week as complementing Mr. Baker's third Middle East tour.

Mr. Dumas said Mr. Arafat had agreed that the community should be present at any peace negotiations.

A senior diplomat from Luxembourg, which holds the EC's rotating presidency, said Israel had yet to decide whether it wants the community to play a role in any conference.

Soviet Middle East specialist Yevgeny Primakov said Sunday he saw positive signs in U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's latest Middle East peace mission.

Mr. Primakov told France's Europe-1 radio network that Mr. Baker's initiative "appeared to be already on its way (and) undergoing a positive change."

"Mr. Baker has a different attitude to European participation in the Middle East peace process. That's something really positive compared with the structure he created initially," the Kremlin aide said in an exclusive interview.

"Secondly, it seems to me that the secretary of state is consid-

ing the Palestinian problem in a more positive manner, not relegating it to second rank," he said.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) also appeared ready to move towards compromise, but would revert to a tougher stance if Israel responded intransigently, Mr. Primakov added.

He said he believed Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh would visit Israel, but gave no date.

"I think he'll go, not to defend this or that plan but to investigate the possibilities of a settlement," Mr. Primakov said.

Asked if Moscow should not persuade its ally Syria to abandon its insistence on a United Nations-sponsored peace conference, which Israel opposes, Mr. Primakov said:

"I think it's more the Americans who should convince the Israelis that the PLO should take part in the process. The PLO is a reality."

"Don't expect the Soviet Union to drive anyone to these negotiations like cattle. Of course we'll act. We want an Israeli-Arab settlement."

"But if we don't start with the Palestinian problem...then it's hard to see how success will be achieved," he added.

## King welcomes Iraqi accord

(Continued from page 1)

Tikrit, President Saddam's hometown, celebrated his birthday with music, traditional dances and official predictions that he will be president for a long time to come.

It was one of many celebrations throughout the country to honour President Saddam on his birthday.

Officials said the Tikrit crowd was much smaller than normal. They attributed that to transportation difficulties in the war-ravaged country and said he remained popular.

"The West would have to kill 18 million Iraqis before they could wound Saddam Hussein," said Izzat Ibrahim, deputy chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council.

"What happened in the last nine months to Iraq and President Saddam Hussein proves he is a legitimate leader and accepted and loved by the Iraqi people," Mr. Ibrahim said.

"He will be president for a long time," said Abdul Razzaq Al Hashemi, the minister of higher education and former ambassador to France.

The officials spoke to a group of foreign journalists on a trip to view the celebration.

The celebration took place in a stadium with paved parade ground where schoolgirls in bright-coloured dresses danced to music blaring from large speakers near a reviewing stand.

Bands playing bagpipes and drums escorted the girls onto the field. Speeches were made and

## Israelis shoot and wound 6

(Continued from page 1)

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Washington views the settlements as an "obstacle" to Middle East.

A leading Palestinian activist, who has jailed for three months by Israel on suspicion he spied for Iraq, was freed Sunday from prison.

Sari Nusseibeh, 42, a U.S.- and British-educated professor from the occupied West Bank, said he spent his time in prison reading and writing, "just what I will continue to do."

He said he had not yet been briefed by other Palestinian leaders on the recent peace shuttle by Mr. Baker. Dr. Nusseibeh had been expected to be among the Palestinians who met with Mr. Baker during his three recent Middle East trips.

During his imprisonment, Dr. Nusseibeh was declared a "prisoner of conscience" by the London-based Amnesty International, and he said he appreciated the group's concern.

"It really made me feel people believed in what I stood for," Dr. Nusseibeh said.

Dr. Nusseibeh, who teaches

philosophy at Bir Zeit university in the West Bank, has been a leading voice for moderation in the 40-month Palestinian uprising.

Dr. Nusseibeh was detained at his home on the edge of Jerusalem on the night of Jan. 29.

The defence ministry said in a statement at the time that Dr. Nusseibeh was "collecting security information for the Iraqi intelligence, especially after the missile attacks on Israel."

Iraq fired 39 missiles at the Jewish state during the Gulf war.

Dr. Nusseibeh denied the allegation and said in a statement issued from jail that "I believe my arrest is intended to silence the voices of moderation."

The defence ministry ordered him held for six months under "administrative detention" rules, which allow the jailing of Palestinians without charge or trial. A district court in February court

ordered the detention cut to three months.

Palestinian leaders and Israeli leftists said that the court's willingness to reduce the ministry's detention order to three months indicated the court did not accept the spying allegations.

Last year, court documents accused him of being a paymaster of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), but no action was taken against him by the government.

Dr. Nusseibeh holds a Ph.D. in Islamic philosophy from Harvard University and an undergraduate degree in philosophy and economics from Oxford in England.

His family, which has been in the region for centuries, by tradition hold the post of "keeper of the door" of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, one of Christianity's holiest shrines.

## Allies want to expand control

(Continued from page 1)

thousands of families fled to territory occupied by the U.S.-led multinational force that fought Iraq in the Gulf war.

The U.S. army took a major step Sunday towards its final pull-out from southern Iraq, starting an airlift to Saudi Arabia of the refugees.

"The U.S. army is getting out of the refugee business here," said John Kall, whose troops have provided food, medical care and protection over the past six weeks for more than 11,000 refugees.

Five air force transport planes took off starting at daybreak from Safwan's air field,

apart from Mr. Chalabi himself, are no longer in Jordan. It was not immediately known whether the authorities will seek their extradition to the Kingdom for trial. The rest of the people named in the final report of a specially appointed investigation panel of banking experts and economists are believed to be in Jordan.

The government has said that Petra Bank cases would be the last cases to be tried under the now-almost-defunct martial law in Jordan. The take-over of Petra Bank was ordered by the ESC under martial law provisions. The government has since then abolished all martial law provisions except in the case of Petra Bank.

An ESC-appointed committee managed the affairs of Petra Bank and tried to salvage the financially troubled institution. But the efforts were in vain, and the ESC ordered the bank liquidated in April last year, eight months after the take-over. An appointed committee is in charge of the liquidation process.

## Detained publisher released

(Continued from page 1)

Bank, several former employees of Petra Bank, former officials of two other banks and others.

According to the sources, around 45 people could be charged and the total number of cases was more than 100.

Mr. Chalabi, who left the country in August 1988 a few days after the Economic Security Committee (ESC) ordered the take-over of Petra Bank, is expected to be named as the first defendant in almost all the cases, which are believed to involve "gross violations of Jordanian banking regulations, embezzlement of funds and speculation in currency." The total amount involved in the cases — or the actual loss suffered by Petra Bank — is believed to reach the JD 400 million mark.</



## Water lifeline threatened

(Continued from page 1)

of King Talal Dam after the loss of this season's crops. But he did not explain why the water, which he said contained boron, a toxic element, and other chemical substances, was allowed to pass through irrigation canals to the Jordan Valley.

Tests conducted by the WRSC showed high levels of boron toxicity in the soil and plants in the Jordan Valley. Tests are still being conducted to determine if there are heavy metals in the soil, which could destroy farming in the valley for many years to come.

The JVA and WAJ, which are required by law to provide safe water for irrigation, had earlier denied farmers' charges that the water was unsuitable for irrigation, according to farmers.

"This is a criminal negligence on the part of the government," said a farmer. "I invested hundreds of thousands of dinars in the farm this year and the Water Authority destroys my crops with sewage water. The question is who is responsible for this fiasco," he said.

Dr. Salameh, recounting a story of what he described as "negligence and mismanagement" by the government, mainly blamed the inefficiency of the Khirbet Al Samra waste treatment plant for the deteriorating water quality in the dam.

Dr. Salameh, disagreeing with the minister, said industrial waste dumped in the Zarqa River had very little to do with the polluted water of the dam. He said attempts by the government to blame industrial waste for the problem was a "cover up" for the failure of the Khirbet Al Samra plant, which is located at Wadi Dajil north of Zarqa. Industrial effluent was only recently connected to King Talal Dam and not all industries have been connected, he said.

Dr. Salameh argued that if industrial waste water was the reason for what happened, then farms between Khirbet Al Samra and King Talal Dam would have displayed the same effects as farms in the Jordan Valley.

"The pollution story began a long time ago when they were constructing the dam in 1977," Dr. Salameh pointed out.

He said at that time the water quality was "very suitable" for irrigation but was unsuitable for drinking purposes because of the presence of phosphate and nitrate, which cause a eutrophication process making treatment difficult and costly.

This situation continued until 1985 when the government commissioned the construction of the Khirbet Al Samra plant, Dr. Salameh said.

The plant, which works on a natural stabilisation ponds method (no chemical or mechanical treatment), was originally built as "immediate relief" for the overloaded 'Ain Ghazal waste treatment plant at Marka, just outside Amman.

The 'Ain Ghazal plant was closed in May 1985 by then Minister of Water and Irrigation Mohammad Keilani because of high operating cost and bad odour, according to an internal memorandum signed by Minister Keilani. Experts argue that the permanent closure of the 'Ain Ghazal plant was a mistake and the benefits had outweighed the drawbacks.

Dr. Mohammad Khawaj, a water reclamation engineer at the WRSC, also said the quality of water released from King Talal Dam was not good enough for irrigation purposes. "The treatment plant at Khirbet Al Samra is comparable to treating cancer with aspirin... the process is simply insufficient," according to Dr. Khawaj. He pointed out that under the prevailing conditions in Jordan, including climate and groundwater resources, the plant was not equipped to meet the desired effluent quality.

Dr. Khawaj said 50 per cent of the water reaching King Talal Dam, which has a capacity of 89 million cubic metres, originates from Khirbet Al Samra treatment effluent.

Before the government began construction of Khirbet Al Samra plant in 1985, "we warned them something bad will happen here because of the inadequacy of the treatment plant type," Dr. Salameh told the Jordan Times. He had correspondence with the government and the Water Authority warning them of the risks.

Although the government had said the plant was constructed for immediate relief (a temporary measure for the

'Ain Ghazal plant), Khirbet Al Samra is now the main treatment plant in Jordan.

The WRSC had also warned, in a study published in 1987, that the treatment at Khirbet Al Samra, was not satisfactory, and, as a result the water resources in the area, including King Talal Dam, were rapidly deteriorating.

The study also cautioned about the unsuitability of the dam water for irrigation purposes.

Two studies compiled by Britain's Thames Water Authority and the World Bank had reached the same conclusions that "stabilisation ponds are not capable of reaching their objective" in conditions prevalent in the Kingdom. But, the Water Authority "ignored the results," Dr. Salameh said.

"Since 1985 the quality of water collected at King Talal Dam has been continuously deteriorating and the salinity of that water continuously increasing," said Dr. Salameh. According to data collected by the centre, from 1985 to the end of 1990, water salinity increased threefold.

Studies released by the Royal Scientific Society also reported similar findings about the deterioration of water quality since 1985.

"This is a complete chain from water to human beings," Dr. Salameh said. "Once the water deteriorates, the soil begins to deteriorate, affecting plants, then affecting animals feeding on the plants and finally reaching people," he added.

"We are in the plant portion of the cycle," he explained. "Plants are dying or are non-productive anymore," he said.

Dr. Omar Rimawi, a hydro-chemist at the WRSC, said that testing done on 16 soil samples from the valley two weeks ago confirmed "there is boron toxicity in the soil and plants."

"The amount of boron needed in the soil for optimal growth ranges from 0.01 to four mm per litre. We found boron levels ranging from .6 to 14 mm per litre," Dr. Rimawi said. He added that many plants, even those which are classified as "tolerant" (such as tomatoes), have shown symptoms of boron toxicity and have died.

To (wash out) the boron from the soil, Dr. Rimawi said, "is very difficult and needs a great deal of clean water."

According to experts interviewed by the Jordan Times, a combination of factors could be seen as the reason for the damage in Jordan Valley crops.

These including low water level at the dam's reservoir, contaminated water from the Khirbet Al Samra plant and the failure to mix Yarmouk river water with the dam water to dilute the toxic compounds and salinity.

The water level at the dam's reservoir, which was low due to low precipitation and late rainfall, contained contaminated effluent from Khirbet Al Samra plant causing the interaction of the water with sediments in the dam, producing very high salinity and toxicity.

Since water is discharged from an outlet at the bottom of the reservoir, the level of sediment and salinity of the water becomes higher.

Experts explained that because the salinity was "too high," salts and trace elements started to accumulate in the different soil profiles. This situation, they said, was exacerbated by the lack of water to flush out the salts.

JVA and WAJ officials did not comment on this particular aspect of the situation.

They said that during the months of January and February of this year, the Water Authority stopped mixing "good" Yarmouk River water with the dam water, thus pure dam water, which contained certain poisonous elements, was used to irrigate Jordan Valley farmland. The Yarmouk River water was diverted for use in Amman and to fill Wadi Al Arab Dam.

## Syria

(Continued from page 1)

efforts to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Mr. Rafsanjani's motorcade of some cars arrived in the Sitt Zaynab district about 16 kilometres south of Damascus as the silvery dome of the shrine glowed in the sunlight.

Accompanied by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa, Mr. Rafsanjani entered the shrine, clutched and kissed the golden grill surrounding the grave of the Sitt Zaynab, daughter of Imam Ali, wellspring of the Shiite Islam that inspired the 1979 Iranian revolution.

# Threat of epidemics turning into a grim reality for Iraqis

By Debbie Lovatt  
Special to the Jordan Times

The writer has just returned after a three-week stay in Iraq

CHOLERA IN IRAQ is no longer a threat but a grim reality as hospitals around the country confirm admitting their first cases of the potentially fatal disease.

One hundred and fifteen cases have been confirmed in Basra, seven in Karbala, 10 in Baghdad and Suleimaniya and there are countless suspected cases around the country.

The test for the disease involves growing a culture for 24 hours. Intermittent power supplies make it difficult to carry out the proper test as it requires constant electricity.

With summer rapidly approaching cholera is perhaps the most feared epidemic, but not the only one that concerns doctors and health officials.

Temperatures in Baghdad can exceed 55 degrees Centigrade during the summer months, and conditions are endemic for the spread of cholera and other water-borne diseases normally kept under control through clean water, treatment of sewage and fast effective medical treatment.

Cases of typhoid fever are three times what they were over the winter period last year, incidences of meningitis and infectious hepatitis have all increased, and doctors are seeing children with malnourishment the like of which they only ever saw previously, in medical text books.

The director of the Saddam Central Children's Teaching

Hospital, Dr. Qasim Muhammad Ismail, said: "We have had several cases of suspected cholera in children. And we have had plenty of cases of malnourishment and gastroenteritis this winter. Diarrhoea and vomiting lead to dehydration, weight loss, malnourishment. It is a vicious circle."

Doctors at Alwiyeh Children's Hospital, which is not central like the Saddam Hospital, have seen over 10 cases of suspected cholera and in three days two children died of diarrhoea-related dehydration.

When the Abu Ghraib Baby Milk Plant, which had provided 80 per cent of Iraq's baby milk needs, was destroyed, the government introduced rationing of infant formula. Three 430-gramme tins per month was the allocation per child, but 10 tins per month is the requirement for an infant being entirely bottle-fed.

Dr. Ismail explained what some mothers gave their children as a substitute for milk: "When the milk powder ran out some mothers gave their children rice water, water and sugar, or even very diluted tea."

Since the war started on Jan. 17 and until the second week in April, water was not being purified due to lack of electric power to drive the machines and non-availability of chemicals. Once stocks were depleted the embargo stopped replenishments from being imported.

Advice was given to boil water for 15 minutes if it was for drinking purposes. But with fuel hard to come by for stoves, drinking water may have been sterilised, but not water with which to clean cooking, drinking and eating utensils.

For those now suffering from chronic diarrhoea, the infection was hard to avoid.

Dr. Shamal Saleh of Alwiyeh Children's Hospital said: "Many children die before being admitted to hospital, or die on the way because lack of transport meant they could not get to the hospital. We used to be angry with mothers for not bringing their children in sooner until we realised they couldn't get here."

One mother at Alwiyeh Hospital nursing her child sick with diarrhoea-related malnourishment said: "I knew my son was ill, but couldn't bring him in. There is no transport and I have six other children and I have to look after them. I can't leave them on their own."

Mothers stay at hospital during the day to nurse their sick children.

Transport is a problem because petrol has until now been rationed and is expensive. For those without cars or whose cars have been unable to be repaired for lack of spare parts due to the embargo, public transport is often not a viable alternative as it is overcrowded and the price of a ride has increased five-fold since the war.

In the hospitals limited or no electricity has meant that wards have had to be closed;



Particularly affected by the growing threat of epidemics in Iraq are women and children (Photo by Debbie Lovatt).

lifts do not work nor does monitoring equipment, not to mention lights, refrigerators, and air-conditioning.

Power has been restored to the Saddam Children's Hospital but a back-up generator is still needed in case the electricity fails.

Alwiyeh Children's Hospital, on the other hand, is not yet back on mains electricity and has to rely on a generator. The hospital has fuel to run the generator for only three hours a day.

Incubators are standing empty and unplugged waiting for the electricity to come back. Photosynthesis treatment is available for the treatment of babies at risk of developing jaundice and two or three babies can lie under the same light.

Winter in Iraq is harsh and temperatures low. When power was cut and fuel unavailable for heating, everywhere became cold and dark.

Dr. Sadeq Hashem of Alwiyeh Hospital recalled "Eighteen out of 20 babies I delivered on the first night of the war died sooner or later mainly from cold shock. There was nothing we could do."

Doctors in both hospitals described the same reaction from mothers when the first bombs fell.

"The stress and the shock caused many women to give birth early, and even to miscarry. And in the hospital mothers grabbed their children and unhooked them from drips, blood transfusions, and just ran trying to find somewhere safe to go," said Dr. Shamal Saleh. Many babies died and hospitals transferred patients to

ground floors and basements where mothers felt safer. Basements, however, are a part of the central heating system.

Both hospitals are still working at less than full capacity, but despite the difficulties, necessity is forcing them to admit more patients.

Patients come and doctors work, but facilities are limited. "After the war," said Dr. Shamal Saleh, "basic medicines vital for children were not available. Warehouse supplies had run dry and the blockade prevented restocking."

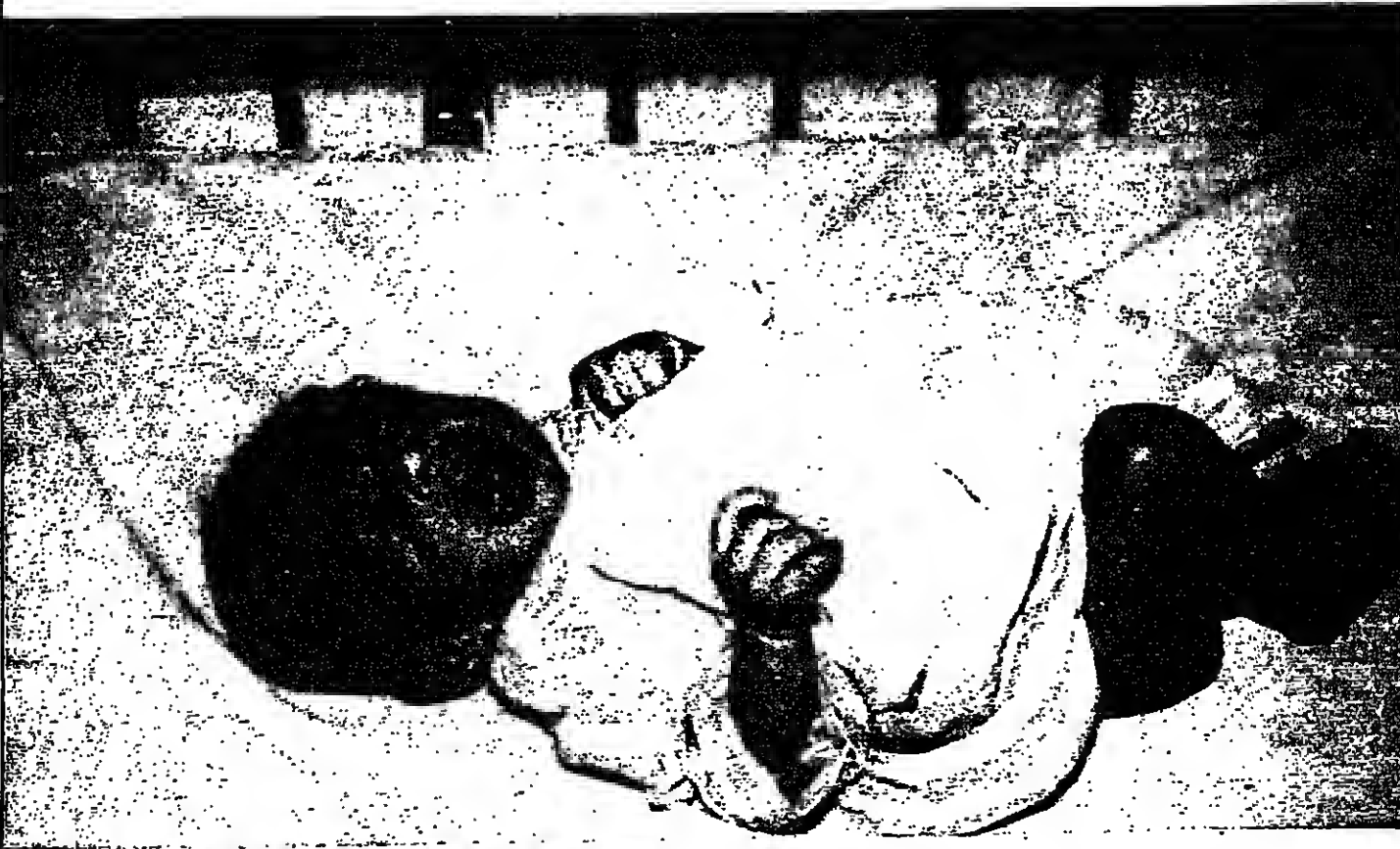
Children's medicines fell under the embargo when, technically, they should not have done so.

As doctors struggle to save young lives, the health situation in Baghdad and throughout the country daily deteriorates.

"If we cure patients we are reluctant to discharge them as they are returning to the same environment which made them sick in the first place," said the over-worked Dr. Sadeq Hashem.

The International Committee of the Red Cross in Baghdad has no figures but estimates for the death rate among young children in Iraq were 10 times higher than usual.

Children below the age of three are particularly vulnerable.



An emaciated child hospitalised in Iraq (Photo by Debbie Lovatt).

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## Temporary abundance of dollars depresses value below CBJ rate

By P.V. Vivekanand  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kuwaiti move to allow foreign transfers of limited amounts abroad has led to what bankers describe as a temporary abundance of American dollars in the Jordanian market.

In turn, the availability of the greenback has depressed its black market value to slightly less than the officially set rate by the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) despite the boost the currency received in the international market over the past week, according to dealers.

The CBJ rate on Saturday for the dollar was 682-686 fils but the American currency was being traded in the parallel (black) market at 675/685 fils. These figures compare with the CBJ rate of 660/665 while the black market rate was 700/710 fils in early February.

"Several hundred thousand dollars have come into Jordan following the Kuwaiti permission for former expatriates to withdraw and transfer abroad up to 4,000 Kuwaiti dinars (\$13,500) per month per account," said a banker.

"In addition, some expatriates who remained in Kuwait (during the Iraqi occupation) have also come out with cash, contributing to the supply situation in the

country," he noted.

"Most of this money found its way to the black market over the past two to three weeks, and suddenly there is an abundance of dollars in hard cash in the market," he explained. "But I don't think the depression in the black market value of the dollar will last long," he added.

"The real demand and supply forces have come to control the market," he noted. "With summer at hand, there is demand for dollars from people who want to travel abroad, and this will boost the black market prices."

Economists said the strength of the dollar at its stabilised value since early 1990 despite the adverse impact of the Gulf crisis on the economy was based on the high foreign exchange reserves of the country as a result of decreased imports and the treasury's selective servicing of its foreign debts.

"When imports get back into full gear, and the treasury resumes its inevitable full servicing of foreign debts, the situation of reserves will not remain as strong as it is now," noted an economist.

"This may have an impact on the strength of the dollar," he said.

Meanwhile, sterling pounds in cash have almost disappeared from the parallel market, dealers

said. "Nobody wants to deal in sterling pounds," said one of them. "The margin of profit on pounds was never lucrative, and to add further disdain among dealers, security forces are keeping a very close watch on sterling pounds in currency."

The dealer could not explain the police alert on the British currency, but a security source said it could be part of a dragnet police has drawn after a recent robbery. The source declined to elaborate.

Other sources said a "good part" of the cash stolen during the robbery was in sterling pounds and apparently police had the serial numbers of the currency.

"There never was any large amount of sterling pounds in circulation in Jordan," noted one source. "It is relatively easy to detect and pinpoint the source of pounds as soon as they appear in the market."

**Iraqi dinar picks up**

The Iraqi dinar, meanwhile, appeared to be picking up in the Jordanian market after plunging to record lows following the Gulf war.

The Iraqi currency was traded Saturday at 100 to 105 fils in the parallel market, compared to 185

to 190 fils prior to the crisis, 140 to 150 fils prior to the war and 110 to 120 immediately after the war.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, when the extent of the damage that the Iraqi infrastructure suffered was known, the price went down to around 80 to 85 fils, and the recovery to 100 to 105 fils was reported since last week.

Bankers linked the recovery to Iraq's acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolution 687 — providing for a formal ceasefire in the war — and the subsequent endorsement of the Iraqi move by the Security Council.

Newly printed Iraqi notes of 25 dinar denomination are sold at 15 to 20 fils less than the old ones in the Jordanian market, despite the fact that their purchasing value within Iraq remained the same.

There was no immediate explanation, but a banker suggested that parallel market dealers were speculating that the new mint did not have proper gold or foreign currency reserve behind them and were deliberately keeping their offer down.

Only two or three commercial banks in Jordan are selling or buying Iraqi dinars; others suspended all dealings in the currency immediately after the invasion of Kuwait.

## Israel presses Japanese firms to defy Arab trade boycott

TEL AVIV (R) — Toyota Motor Corp's decision this month to sell cars in Israel is the latest sign that major Japanese firms may be struggling off a decades-old Arab League boycott of Israel.

"Our main problem with Japan is that they are much more concerned about the boycott than any other industrialised nation," Moshe Kobi, assistant director of the economic warfare authority in the Israeli finance ministry, said.

"From this point of view, the entrance of Toyota is a very important development and we hope others will follow," he said.

Under the boycott, directed from Damascus, Arab states threaten to blacklist foreign firms trading with Israel.

Israel accuses companies in South Korea, Germany and Britain and other countries of acquiescence in the boycott, but directs some 40 per cent of its 300 annual complaints at Japanese firms.

After the Gulf crisis revealed a divide in the Arab World, Israel launched a fresh drive to break the boycott.

The United States, eager to advance Middle East peace, has urged Japan and Arab states to ease the boycott. U.S. Jewish leaders said that even Kuwait, formerly a staunch adherent, may

stop blacklisting U.S. firms which trade with Israel.

"As a government we are against the Arab boycott," said Minister Takashi Nakamoto, the second-ranking Japanese diplomat in Israel. "But our economy is a free market and we cannot force private enterprises to do anything."

He said Japan had increased trade with Israel since the 1970s, when Tokyo imported more than 90 per cent of its oil from Arab countries and felt very vulnerable. Japan still gets about 70 per cent from the Gulf, but oil is now a buyer's market.

Israeli businessmen believe Washington's pressure has helped pave the way for more business contacts. They cite signs, such as an increase in Japanese prospecting missions and a planned visit by Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama next month.

Underscoring Tokyo's efforts to boost trade, Japan plans to send its first commercial attaché to Tel Aviv by July. Israel has had an economic attaché in Tokyo since last year.

"I think there has been a

tremendous change in the Japanese government's attitude," said Elhanan Harel, chairman of the Israel-Japan Chamber of Commerce in Tel Aviv.

"The Gulf crisis made it realise that its economic behaviour did not correspond to its world status," he said.

Other businessmen say firms like Toyota, which never acknowledged it was observing the boycott, realised they could trade with Israel with impunity. There has been no Arab outcry.

Japanese cars already dominate Israel's roads, although one of the largest firms, Honda Motor Co. Ltd., sells via its U.S. subsidiary.

Japanese electronic goods are plentiful but reach Israel primarily through third countries, to skirt the boycott.

Bilateral trade has doubled in the past five years to more than \$1.4 billion in 1990 and Japan has become one of Israel's most important export markets.

On paper, Israel had a \$320 million trade surplus with Japan last year.

But polished diamonds form 75

per cent of Israeli exports and Israel wants to sell more computer software, electro-optical products, food, chemicals and other items in Japan.

Officials say they will declare a hunkerbrot in Japan's attitude towards the boycott only when major Japanese industrial firms begin dealing directly with Israel, the nations establish commercial air links and Japanese ships call in Israeli ports.

They also want Japanese firms selling to Israel to buy local products, and more importantly, to invest.

There are only a handful of joint ventures and the largest current Japanese investment is the \$6.7 million Nature Beta Technologies (NBT) plant which grows algae that Japanese customers believe can cure skin cancer.

Japan's particular sensitivity to Middle East instability could hinder investment. During the Gulf war, Tokyo cut postal services to the region and Japanese banks halted letters of credit, bringing Israeli-Japanese commerce to a standstill.

## Strike risks closure of Turkish Airlines

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish Airlines (THY) faces the risk of closure with no deal in sight to solve a 25-day-old strike that has cost more than \$40 million so far, THY General Manager Cem Kozlu has said.

"There's a danger of closing the airline. We're getting nowhere in talks with the union. We're beating around the bush," Kozlu told Reuters. About 10,500 THY and airport staff seek pay rises of between 100 and 600 per cent.

"We're trying to find a solution. It'll become clear in the next few days whether there'll be an agreement or not. If not, I'm afraid the airline won't be able to survive," he said.

"It's difficult to rehabilitate THY after so many blows," he added, referring to the effects of the Gulf crisis, which forced many world airlines to lay off staff and withdraw services.

President Turgut Ozal, who says loss-making state enterprises must be sold at any cost, vowed Wednesday to shut down THY if the strike continued.

He said "unreasonable" wage

demands amounted to half the airline's annual turnover. Big pay demands are common in high-inflation Turkey.

Under the management of Kozlu, a young, hard-working technocrat, THY was regarded as one of the most promising state enterprises in Turkey. Many others, numbering over 40 and employing over 600,000 staff, are in financial trouble.

THY made a \$75 million loss in 1990 due to higher fuel costs brought by the Gulf crisis and a drop of over 30 per cent in its passenger traffic in the last quarter of 1990.

It is dropping flights to Toronto, Budapest, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Dhahran, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi and Amman. It also cancelled the opening offices in Barcelona and Warsaw.

Kozlu said THY was seeking a delay in deliveries of an Airbus 310 and a medium-haul Boeing 737-400 aircraft scheduled for this year. The airline has already returned two Boeing 707 cargo planes this month, refusing to renew their lease.

## China hikes prices on staple foods

BEIJING (R) — China officially announced huge price increases on staple foods Sunday, saying they were necessary because of the crushing burden of government subsidies which have quadrupled in 10 years.

Residents were told about the price hikes at their work places last week, triggering long queues at shops where April ration cards could still be used to buy goods at the old prices.

The price of flour rises by 54 per cent and vegetable oil by 10s per cent. The prices of all goods made from these products, including cakes, noodles and soybean, also go up.

The government explained why it needed to raise prices in a document quoted by the New China News Agency.

"(The document) pointed out that the present unreasonable prices have severely added to the state's financial burden," it said.

The government paid 40 billion yuan (\$5.59 billion) in grain and cooking oil subsidies in 1990, compared with 10.8 billion yuan (\$2.05 billion) in 1980, the news agency said.

Prices, especially of food, are a very sensitive issue in China. Runaway inflation in 1989, caused in part by looser control by Beijing over prices, was a factor in bringing out workers onto the streets in mass anti-government protests that were eventually crushed by the army.

To soften the latest inflationary blow every worker will get a six yuan (\$1.14) a month subsidy.

## U.S. cites Thailand, China, India and Japan for trade violations

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top government trade official is threatening strong action against several countries accused of discriminating against U.S. businesses or allowing unpaid use of copyrighted U.S. products.

"Our goal is to improve the level of intellectual property protection worldwide," said U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills as she set in motion a legal process which could lead to trade sanctions against China, India and Thailand.

She also announced her intention to bar Japan from federally funded construction projects, accused Norway of violating trade obligations by discriminating against U.S. companies, and put Brazil, Australia and the European Community (EC) on a high-priority list of countries to monitor.

Twenty-three other countries are also on a lower-priority "watch list" because they maintain practices or have set up trade barriers that "are of particular concern."

U.S. movie producers, software manufacturers, authors, musicians and others are losing billions of dollars in possible royalties, fees and other payments they would be getting if all countries would protect their rights, the trade representative's office said.

The announcement came in the trade representative's third annual review of trading partners' practices. A 1988 law requires her to make the annual review and take action against countries

which are treating U.S. businesses unfairly.

"Although we have made progress with other countries in intellectual property and government procurement issues, today's announcement underscores the persistent nature of problems with those countries identified," Ms. Hills said.

The focus on China, India and Thailand makes them as countries whose practices are "the most onerous and egregious and who are not negotiating in good faith or making progress in negotiations."

Naming them as "priority foreign countries" starts a six-month investigation which could lead to trade sanctions. Thailand is already under investigation for previous alleged violations of intellectual property practices.

Ms. Hills said U.S. officials would meet with representatives of the three countries soon and hope "to make quick progress on these important issues."

China is the only major U.S. trading partner to offer neither product protection for pharmaceuticals and other chemicals, nor copyright protection for U.S. works, according to a "fact sheet" issued by Ms. Hill's office.

In addition, it said, trademarks are granted to the first registrant in China, regardless of the original owner. Trade secrets are also said to be inadequately protected in China.

"As a result, piracy of all forms of intellectual property is widespread in China, accounting for significant losses to U.S. industries," the report said.

The administration accused India of providing inadequate patent protection and allowing widespread piracy. It also found that market access for U.S. movies is severely restricted through quotas, fees and other barriers.

## Murdoch to sell U.S. publications for \$650 million

NEW YORK (R) — In a major step to sell off assets and cut debt, media magnate Rupert Murdoch has struck a deal to sell nine U.S. publications to a Wall Street investment group for \$650 million, a source close to Murdoch has said.

The deal with Kohlberg Kravis Roberts (KKR) and Co., the firm involved in some of the biggest U.S. takeovers and leveraged buyouts, will give Murdoch a cash infusion of \$8.2 billion to help pay down his \$8.2 billion debts.

The source said papers for the sale are being prepared, but have not yet been signed.

The publications are part of a \$2 billion asset-sale programme that will shrink Murdoch's worldwide media empire but will also leave it in a healthier financial state.

"Some people would say he is skating on thin ice with his financing," said Christopher Buttery,

president in the New York office of Ord Minnett Inc., an Australian broker.

"But having said that, the big differences between Murdoch and other tycoons is that he has always stayed on to produce and does know what he's doing," Buttery said.

In the past few years Murdoch has steadily shed holdings but the deal involving the nine publications ranks among Murdoch's biggest divestitures.

Those being sold are New York magazine, Seventeen, the movie Magazine Premiere, European Travel and Life, Automobile, New Woman, Soap Opera Digest, Soap Opera Weekly and the Racing Form, a daily that covers thoroughbred racing.

Analysts say virtually everything outside his core media properties is on the auction block. Next to go could be his 50 per cent stake in Ansett Airlines,



Rupert Murdoch

Australia's private domestic carrier, or his Australian printing operations.

Australian-born Murdoch is hanging on to Mirabella, a fashion magazine he launched in 1989 with the former editor of Vogue, and TV Guide, which he bought with the Racing Form and Seventeen for \$3 billion in 1988.

"He's keeping Mirabella because he believes it has enormous potential," the source said. "It's in the development stage and doing enormously well."

## Inflation soars, unemployment grows steadily in Czechoslovakia

PRAGUE (AP) — The government's "shock therapy" economic reform programme has come under attack after official figures indicated a soaring inflation rate and growing unemployment.

In an attempt to transform the centrally planned Communist system into a market economy, reformers led by Finance Minister Václav Klaus launched the "shock therapy" programme in January, including deregulating prices and swift privatisation of state-run enterprises.

An official report released by the state CTK news agency said the inflation rate was 40.9 per cent at the end of March. The government had projected an annual inflation rate for 1991 at a maximum of 30 per cent.

Consumer prices rose by 54 per cent, retail sales went down by 37.1 per cent and industrial production dropped by 11.9 per cent during the first three months of

the year, CTK quoted the official report as saying.

In a country unaccustomed to joblessness, the unemployment rate hit 2.6 per cent of the workforce by the end of March, according to the report. In the Slovak republic, 3.8 per cent of the working population were without jobs.

Vice Premier Pavel Rychetsky, the head of the Civic Movement, the liberal faction of the former

Civic Forum, which won last year's national elections, called such developments "alarming."

"There is a danger of uncontrollable inflation ... and reform is not feasible in such conditions," Rychetsky told journalists.

"Economic reform cannot be implemented without a broad social consensus ... and not when the fate of the federation is at stake," Rychetsky said.

### AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Sunday, April 28, 1991 Central Bank official rates			
	Buy	Sell	
U.S. dollar	682.0	686.0	
Pound Sterling	1152.9	1159.8	
Deutschemark	389.1	391.4	
Swiss franc	461.5	464.3	
French franc	115.3	116.0	
Japanese yen (for 100)	493.4	496.4	
Dutch guilder	345.6	347.7	
Swedish crown	112.1	112.8	
Italian lira (for 100)	52.7	53.0	
Belgian franc (for 10)	189.4	190.5	

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## Yeltsin, facing test of loyalties over strike, wins key support

MOSCOW (R) — Boris Yeltsin, under pressure from striking coalminers to explain his apparent switch in calling for an end to industrial action, has won fresh support from a key opposition group inside his Russian Federation.

Leaders of Democratic Russia, an umbrella group that helped catapult Yeltsin to power, have nominated him as candidate for the first elected presidency of the Russian Federation, the largest Soviet republic.

But after his joint call with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev last week for an end to the crippling strike, the group and the miners criticised Yeltsin and said he should explain his about-turn.

Yuri Afanasyev, a historian and radical leader, said by signing the declaration, Yeltsin had upset

efforts by the Democrats to join the labour movement to oppose Gorbachev and bring about political and economic reform.

"The main demands of the democratic movement and the working movement coincided on many points," Afanasyev told a plenum of Democratic Russia, which claims 1.3 million members.

Afanasyev said his group now faced a dilemma. Although it disagreed with the Yeltsin-Gorbachev declaration, it did not want to appear to be turning its back on Yeltsin.

As well as demanding improved conditions and pay, the miners are calling for Gorbachev's resignation.

The election for presidency of the Russian Federation is set for June 12, the first democratic poll in

Soviet history.

Analysts say Yeltsin is certain to win the vote. It will give him moral leverage over the Soviet leader, his arch-rival, who has never faced a popular election.

A strike committee in the huge Kuzbass Coalfields said Yeltsin, who championed the cause of the striking coalminers, would visit the Siberian region Monday to explain his sudden backing for calls that the miners end their eight-week action.

"We are waiting for Yeltsin to come here and explain his position," Sergei Veronkov said.

But Kuzbass Strike Committee Deputy Chairman Alexander Aslanidi warned: "we keep saying we don't worship Boris Yeltsin, everything will depend on how he solves the problems."

Yeltsin, who last week said he expected an important document

aimed at ending the strike to be signed at the weekend, has not given any details of his plans.

**Floods cause damage**

Spring floods have caused tens of billions of roubles' worth of damage and affected the lives of 40,000 people in central Russia, Soviet television said Saturday.

It said floodwaters covered 50,000 square kilometres of land in the Volgograd region predicted losses would total about 35 billion roubles (\$60 billion at the inflated official exchange rate).

The television showed pictures of villages and fields under water. It gave no details of casualties but said 50,000 cattle would have to be moved.

Local authorities were angry that Russian authorities were reacting too slowly and not sending enough help, it said.

## De Klerk returns to a South Africa in turmoil

JOHANNESBURG (R) — President F.W. De Klerk has returned to a South Africa wracked by violence and political division in a sorry contrast to the bright post-apartheid future he described to audiences on a European tour.

Sixteen people were killed in weekend political unrest and tensions in black townships were high following a spate of assassinations of anti-apartheid officials.

Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) launched one of its toughest attacks on De Klerk, who returned from a European trip Saturday, accusing the army of planning to cripple its work by assassinating ANC officials.

The anti-apartheid group rejected a government invitation to multi-party talks next month on ways to end brutal township warfare that has taken 5,000 lives in four years.

"What De Klerk told the Europeans about a vibrant, wonderful South Africa on track to democracy was utter rubbish," said Afrikaans political scientist Willem Kleyman.

"South Africa is in turmoil. We're in deep trouble here," he told Reuters. "Blacks do not trust whites and whites still have the apartheid beliefs that destroyed South Africa. De Klerk, with his smile, deceives himself and the world."

Commenting on the ANC's latest accusations, University of Stellenbosch politics Professor Herman Gilliomme said it showed "the ANC is in no state for reform negotiations. It will probably want another year or two before they embark on that."

Endemic township violence has undermined talks between Pretoria and the ANC aimed at creating a post-apartheid society. Night curfews and wide police powers of search and arrest have failed to stop the clashes.

De Klerk visited Britain, Denmark and Ireland to drum up foreign investment to stimulate the stagnant economy and underpin reforms aimed at ending 300 years of white domination.

He failed to win concrete pledges of investment but eased his minority white government's international isolation.

"After the headiness of Europe, it's back to earth with a bump," commented the Sunday Star. "The hard reality is that President De Klerk needs his triumph at home now, and a harder-nosed ANC is not going to give them lightly."

Gilliomme said a new tougher attitude to De Klerk by the ANC was an attempt to play for time to solve internal power struggles and rebuild sagging support in the townships.

"The ANC is worried about its power base, about whether entering unpopular negotiations would risk wasting the enormous human sacrifices it has made over the years," he said.

## Brooke faces huge task at N. Ireland talks

BELFAST (R) — Britain's Northern Ireland Minister Peter Brooke faces a monumental task at Tuesday's talks between Catholic and Protestant politicians on a local power-sharing government for the divided province.

After 14 months of painstaking diplomacy in a land where sectarian hatred burns fiercely, Brooke has won agreement from leaders of the Protestant unionist majority and the nationalist Catholic minority to sit round the same table.

The remarkable breakthrough spelled new hope for an end to Northern Ireland's political and sectarian conflict which has claimed almost 3,000 lives in two decades. But those involved say the road to any agreement will be long and arduous.

Brooke begins a delicate balancing act Tuesday to set in motion a process which could end 17 years of direct rule from London and bring seemingly implacable foes together in a power-sharing pact.

Seventy years after Northern Ireland was partitioned off, Britain and Ireland are struggling with one of history's most intractable equations.

One million Northern Protestants, enjoying a 2-1 majority in Northern Ireland, would have no wish to join a Catholic-dominated country where divorce and abortion are banned. In a united Ireland they would be putrum 4-1.

The talks, due to run for 10 weeks and dubbed the "Brooke initiative", are to have an additional dimension with the Dublin government being brought in to discuss North-South relations and relations between Ireland and mainland Britain.

"Their task is monumental and success is still a long way off," said Dublin's Sunday Tribune newspaper in an editorial.

"All that needs to be done is to wish them well and hope that the compromises which were necessary to get to this stage can be replicated in the actual negotiations," it said.

Tuesday's talks will be held at

parliamentary buildings at Stormont, an imposing white-stone mansion overlooking Belfast's city centre. Its parliamentary chambers have gathered dust since direct rule from London was introduced.

Initially, there will be talks between Brooke and the province's political parties, followed by negotiations on new political structures for Northern Ireland.

After this Brooke will decide at what stage the Dublin government should join the negotiating process. A venue for this second stage would have to be agreed.

All sides involved in the talks will be trying to improve and transcend the landmark 1985 Anglo-Irish agreement which gave Dublin a consultative voice in the running of Northern Ireland.

That agreement is scorned by the unionists who regard it as betrayal by Britain, pushing the province along the road towards Irish unity. They are calling for the Irish Republic to drop the claim to Northern Ireland enshrined in its constitution.

On the formidable task ahead, Brooke said: "Some may have been surprised that we have made the progress we have made so far. I have always erred on the side of caution. I shall continue with that mood."

Irish Foreign Minister Gerry Collins said Friday after talks with Brooke in London:

"A successful outcome would mean we have no winners and no losers. A successful outcome would mean we would no longer have terrorists involved in the Northern Ireland situation."

Sinn Féin, political wing of the Irish Republican Army fighting to oust Britain from Northern Ireland, has been excluded from the talks because it refuses to renounce violence.

Brooke was asked how an increase in violence might interfere with the talks.

He said: "I would be concerned about an increasing level of paramilitary violence in any circumstances... I would express confidence that those who participate in democratic talks will see off the terrorists."

## Salvadorean government, rebels agree to reforms

MEXICO CITY (R) — El Salvador's Government and rebels agreed to a package of constitutional reforms which a United Nations envoy said would bring the country's 11-year-long civil war nearer to an end.

"The agreements are important... without a doubt it's going to help negotiations in El Salvador," U.N. envoy Alvaro de Soto told reporters shortly before the signing ceremony that ended more than three weeks of tough negotiations in a Mexico City hotel.

Both sides hailed the accord as a breakthrough, saying it laid the groundwork for reforms that would tackle the root causes of the war that has killed 75,000 people.

But rebel leaders cautioned there was still a long way to go before peace was achieved.

"We have only just begun to

negotiate," Joaquín Villalobos, one of the five rebel chieftains of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) told a news conference late Saturday.

"It's a partial accord because there are many more problems needing to be solved that gave rise to the war," he said.

The reform package proposes the strengthening of civilian control of the armed forces which human rights groups hold responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians during the war. It also seeks a more independent judicial and electoral system.

The agreement also covers the formation of a three-member body known as "the truth commission" which would be named by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar to probe the most serious human rights violations since 1980.

## COLUMN

### Medical report challenges Christ's resurrection

LONDON (R) — Jesus Christ was probably resuscitated, not resurrected, said a report in a British medical journal which challenged the main tenet of the Christian religion. "As his crucifixion Jesus was in shock; and hypotensive (suffering from low blood pressure) and lost consciousness because of diminished blood supply to the brain," said the report in the Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London. "His ashen skin and immobility were mistaken for death and there is no doubt that the hysteresis believed he was dead." The report, by retired physician Trevor Lloyd Davies and his theologian wife Margaret Davies, said Christ, weakened by flagging, collapsed early on the cross. His heartbeat and breathing would have fallen to undetectable levels, it said. "Oxygen supply to the brain remained minimal but above a critical down from the cross and laid on the ground," it said. Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ, convicted as a criminal, died on the cross and was resurrected three days later. A Church of England spokesman was sceptical about the report. "If Christ did not die, then what happened to him?" he asked. "I would have thought that if he had been around, somebody would have told the court and they would have made quite sure that they found him."

### Imelda Marcos drops in on Miss Saigon

NEW YORK (R) — Former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos took in the hit Broadway musical Miss Saigon and met its Philippine star Lea Salonga. "She did a great job," Marcos told Reuters after meeting with Salonga, who plays a Vietnamese prostitute in the musical. "I wished her well. The last time I met her was in the Philippines." Marcos is living in New York while she fights to be allowed to return to her homeland. "I used to bring her to the palace when she was nine years old. She used to sing Tomorrow, Tomorrow, from Annie and that face of innocence was still there tonight," said Marcos. Salonga urged the former first lady to visit the show again. "After all you started my career," she said.

### TV helps capture criminals

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In the end, a TV show helped accomplish in five days what investigators had not been able to do in 11 years: Locate the man suspected of detonating the bomb that killed a Chilean dissident. On Tuesday, Virgilio Pablo Paz Romero was arrested as he pulled up in his pickup truck to the landscaping business he has operated for six years near West Palm Beach, Florida. The Cuban exile was the remaining fugitive in the Sept. 21, 1976, Washington, D.C., deaths of former Chilean Ambassador Orlando Letelier and his aide Ronni Moffitt. The arrest came after someone watching Fox-TV's "America's Most Wanted" show on April 19 recognised Paz's picture as the face of landscaper Frank Baez, Paz, 39, was arrested on charges of conspiracy to murder a foreign official and conspiracy to manufacture explosives. "For us, this is a big capture," said John Walsh, host of the 3-year-old series based in the nation's capital. Past accomplishments include the 1989 arrest of John Emil List, who eluded authorities for 18 years after killing his mother, his wife and their three children. Of 347 fugitives profiled on the show, 148 have been arrested as the direct result of viewer tips, said programme spokesman Jack Breslin. Eight of those were on the FBI's most wanted list.

### Borg's wife leaves hospital

MILAN, Italy (R) — Loredana Berte, the wife of Swedish tennis star Björn Borg, left hospital Saturday after recovering from a suicide attempt. Borg was not present when the 40-year-old Italian pop singer drove away from Milan's Fatebenefratelli Hospital with a friend. She was admitted three days earlier after swallowing a large quantity of sedatives at Borg's Milan flat. Berte's doctor said she had made a complete recovery. "Her condition merits her release, which she herself had requested to escape a siege that has passed all limits of tolerance," Ezio Omboni said, referring to the crowd of photographers at the hospital.

## Major boosted by opinion polls

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister John Major retains a high personal rating with voters but election prospects for his Conservative Party are mixed, according to opinion poll results in Sunday newspapers.

Four surveys, published ahead of key local elections this week which could determine the timing of the next general election, suggested Major had won approval for his replacement for the unpopular poll tax announced last Tuesday.

The polls gave Major a personal approval rating between 59 and 68 per cent but showed less clear support for his party.

The Independent On Sunday gave the conservatives 47 per cent against 37 for Labour, while the Sunday Times gave the conservatives 42 per cent and Labour 40.

The Sunday Express put the two parties level on 41 per cent,

while in the Sunday telegraph's survey Labour was three points clear on 42 per cent.

Local elections in most of England and Wales on May 2 will be the first high electoral test for Major since he replaced Margaret Thatcher as prime minister in November.

The Conservatives' showing will determine when Major decides to call a general election which must be held by mid-1992.

The Sunday Times said the government planned to take advantage of an expected fall in annual inflation from 8.2 per cent to six per cent month to cut high interest rates which have squeezed homeowners, the backbone of conservative support.

"Party managers believe that a steady stream of interest rate reductions will boost public confidence in the economy over the summer, enabling John Major to



John Major

call a general election in the autumn," the paper said.

The government says it will finance local government by bringing in a new tax based on property values to replace the poll tax, which was condemned as unjust because rich and poor paid the same.

## Royalty, movie stars to contest Indian elections

NEW DELHI (R) — Two prostitutes, several members of old royal families, a legendary screen lover and a former Mr. Universe are among candidates contesting general elections in the world's most populous democracy.

The more exotic candidates threaten at times to put in the shade the leaders of the main Indian political parties and the issues on which the polls will be fought on May 20, 23, 26, and June 6, 8 and 22.

In a prestigious New Delhi seat, 1970s film idol Rajesh Khanna has been put up by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party against Lal Krishan Advani, who could be premier if his powerful Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) wins this election.

Khanna, quick known as "the phenomenon" for his roles as a tragic screen lover, has for once turned the spotlight away from retired film star Jayalalitha. She stepped out of roles as a screen siren to become leader of a regional party which appears set to come to power in Tamil Nadu state in south India.

India's royal families, who lost control of their states on independence from Britain in 1947 and lost their official incomes when then Premier Indira Gandhi abolished their remaining privileges in 1969, bring a touch of court intrigue to the polls.

The royal house of Scindia is split down the middle with Queen Mother Vijay Rajee Scindia and daughter Vasundhara Rajee contesting the polls for the BJP while son Madhavraj is for the Congress.

Sport, another arena which produces colourful national figures, is fielding former test cricket captain Mansur Ali Khan, a royal himself and a nabab of the Muslim aristocracy.

## Shuttle launched on military research mission

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida (R) — The U.S. space shuttle Discovery was launched from Florida Sunday on the 40th shuttle mission in 10 years, a daring research flight for the "Star Wars" missile defence programme.

The shuttle thundered from its launch pad at 7:34 a.m. EDT (11:34 GMT), half an hour later than planned because of a brief technical problem with one of its flight recorders.

It was carrying seven astronauts and \$254 million worth of experiments for scientists working on the U.S. Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI).

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said it would be the most complicated mission ever attempted with a space shuttle. During eight days in orbit, Discovery would be used to mimic a ballistic missile streaking through space.

NASA launched the shuttle at the second attempt in five days and after a brief delay to check a flight recorder, which inadvertently started running shortly before the originally scheduled lift-off time. Discovery's 12th trip into orbit had been halted Tuesday when an engine component failed and had to be replaced.

The aim of the mission is to help scientists design sensors for satellites that can track and destroy enemy missiles.

It was the first time since January 1986, when the shuttle Challenger exploded, that NASA had launched two shuttles in the same calendar month. The shuttle Atlantis flew on April 4 on a six-day mission to deploy an astronomy satellite.

Despite the technical problems with Discovery, NASA achieved one of the shortest intervals, 24 days, between shuttle flights. The record was 16 days in January 1986.

Discovery's flight was to have taken place on Feb. 26 but was postponed twice previously because of problems with three of the shuttle's manoeuvring jet thrusters and large cracks in two of its fuel-door hinges.

Discovery lifted off with four Defence Department payloads in its cargo bay. One of the payloads was a secret, identified only as a small satellite that would be released from the shuttle near the end of the flight.

## Kaifu assures Asia no repeat of military past

KUALA LUMPUR (R) — Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, starting an Asian tour as Japanese minesweepers sail for the Gulf, has given an assurance that his country's military past would not be repeated.

"We are conscious that Japan's action in the past brought about unbearable suffering to the people of Asia," a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said Saturday night after Kaifu met Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Muhammad.

"And since we have this reflection on the past, what we intend

to do is not to contribute with force, in other words in military terms," the official said.

Kaifu, on a nine-day tour of five South East Asian nations, held wide-ranging talks with Mahathir on economic issues and explained the decision to dispatch the minesweepers, Japan's first overseas military mission since World War II.

Japan conquered much of South East Asia during the war and many people in these countries are still bitter about Tokyo's blood-stained colonial rule which ended with its defeat in 1945.

## Police search for gunmen who fired at Chamorro

MANAGUA (R) — Nicaragua's interior minister said police began a nationwide manhunt Saturday for gunmen who fired shots from an assault rifle at a hotel where President Violeta Chamorro was attending a wedding reception.

"These are the type of actions that truly destabilise the country," Interior Minister Carlos Hurtado said in a statement on national television, in which he announced the search.

Unknown assailants riding in fast-moving cars fired at least 15 shots at the Intercontinental Hotel with an AK-47 assault rifle early Saturday while Chamorro was inside at her niece's wedding reception.

Police chief Rene Vivas said he did not view the attack as an assassination attempt but considered it an "act of intimidation." Two men were slightly wounded. Chamorro said she was unharmed by the shooting.

"I remained calm so that the other guests would not be scared," Chamorro said, quoted in the newspaper La Prensa.

The attackers "must become accustomed to the new life of reconciliation," said Chamorro, who Thursday celebrated her first year in office.

Chamorro, whose government ended 10 years of leftist Sandinista rule in Nicaragua, left the hotel unhurt about an hour after the shooting shortly after midnight. Her spokeswoman Danilo Lacayo said.

"I don't think this was a personal attack (against Chamorro)," Vivas said. "But I don't think this was an isolated action by a crazy man. It was an act of intimidation against the government."

He declined to speculate on who might be behind the attack. Hurtado said only it was the work of extremists.

Taiwan delegation leaves on historic visit to China

TAIPEI (R) — A Taiwan delegation left on an historic visit to China Sunday, seeking to open a channel of communication between the two sides after more than 40 years of cold war confrontation.

attacks by Chinese fishing boats on Taiwanese fishermen.

The nationalist government, which fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war on the mainland, still claims to be the legitimate ruler of China. The foundation is technically a private organisation, allowing Taipei to maintain its ban on official contact.

But the visit "clearly shows that relations between the two sides are about to enter a new era," Taiwan's official Central Daily News said in an editorial Sunday. It called on Peking to make compromises and work for the peaceful renunciation of China.

Taiwan officials said the visit would prepare for future talks and discuss issues that have strained relations in recent months, including a rash of pirate

